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A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES

BY

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That we might try the ground again where once
Through inexperience (as we now perceive)
We missed that happiness we might have found!"

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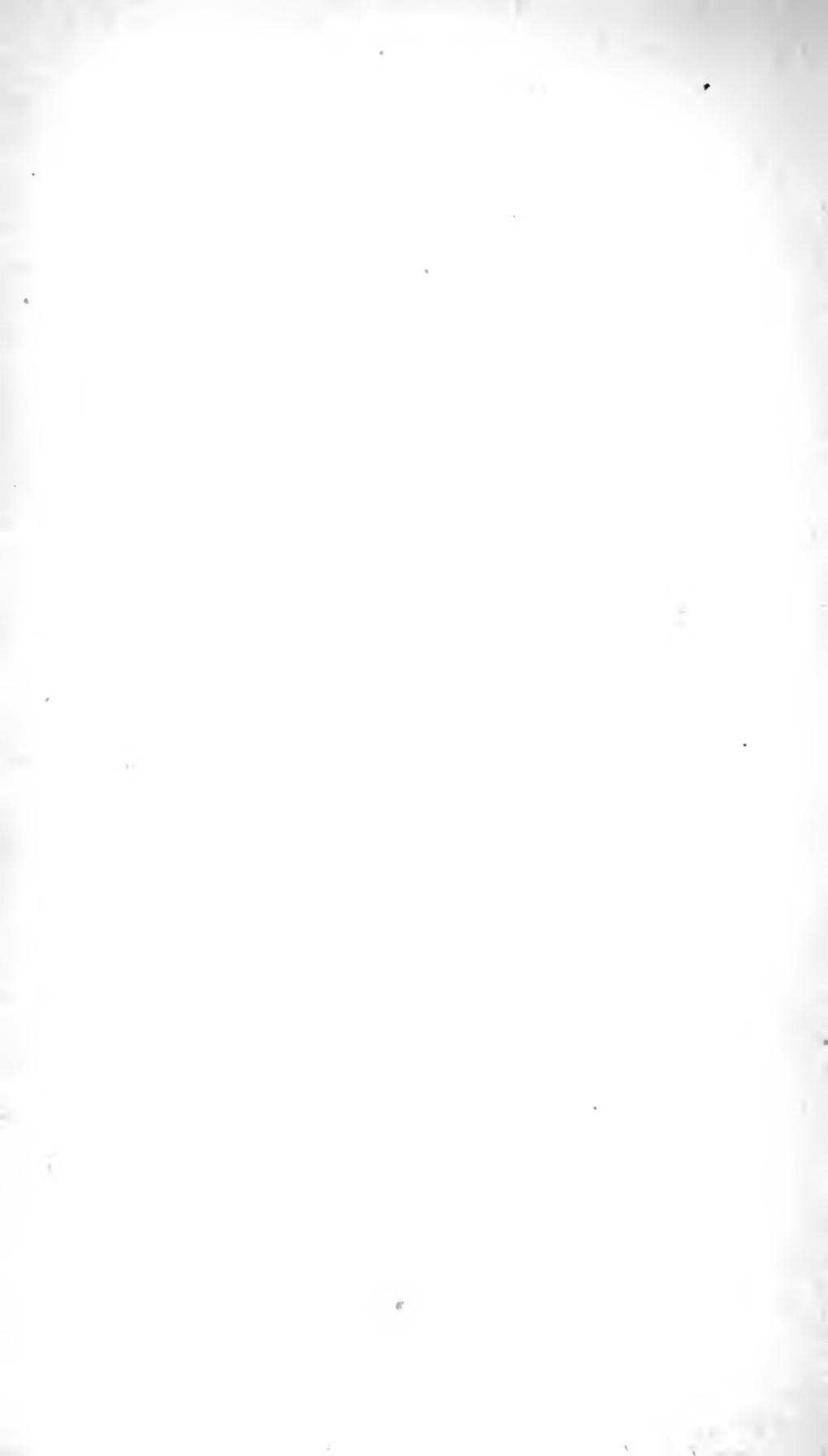
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TO
LADY WILDE,
THIS WORK
IS DEDICATED,
WITH THE BEST REGARDS
OF
THE AUTHOR.

January 25 1858
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PREFACE.

Lest it might be considered that there was a want of originality in introducing into "Yaxley and its Neighbourhood" the subject of Bigamy, lately so much the fashion among novel writers, the Author wishes to observe that the tale was finished just as it stands at present in February, 1861, and that the portion of it relating to the guilty double marriage of one of the characters is unhappily but too true in many of its details.

Blackrock,

November, 1864.

YAXLEY & ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

CHAPTER I.

THE FATHER, THE CHILD, AND THE PUPIL.

IT was one of those winter nights common to our climate ; the sky deep blue ; myriads of stars twinkling down upon the hard earth ; frost thick upon window-panes and white upon roadside hedges ; street puddles frozen—ice everywhere abroad. Many a tender garden plant was that night meekly receiving its death-stroke, while others more hardy drooped their leaves under the crisp coating they had received ; the snail and the worm had hidden themselves away deep in the earth's bosom ; vegetation was at a stand

still ; servants were busy renewing great fires in comfortable sitting-rooms ; elderly gentlemen rubbed their hands together pleasantly, and said the cold was delightfully bracing ; boys thought they would skate next day, if the frost continued ; the very aged, bed-ridden in rooms, whose heat was stifling to their younger companions, felt the ice stealing to their heart's core, pressing heavily on their breath ; young ladies drew near the fire, with their books or needlework ; vagrants in the streets muttered imprecations upon the weather, and drew their scanty covering closer round them ; appetites were sharpened, luxury was enjoyed ; starvation and want were engendering despair ; children with merry eyes and rosy cheeks were laughing in the homes of the well-fed—children with pinched features and pale faces were crying in the garrets of the hungry.

Upon that night the town of Yaxley was very quiet, few people were going through its streets. No one liked being out long, and any that were obliged to encounter the cold, hurried by, with

coats buttoned to the throat, and noses dyed to the deepest hue of purple. In a little cottage of the suburbs of the town a weary man sat in a barely-furnished room, stirring the half-expiring fire—and as he looked into its embers, thinking of life's spark dying out too. He was a small man, of meek aspect, not old in years—yet his hair was thickly besprinkled with white, and lay in thin streaks on his temples. The worn features of his face might have struck any observer with a feeling of interest, if not of pain ; the hands were thin, too, very thin and pale, and his clothes, as if they laboured under the same complaint as the wearer, were thin, threadbare, and faded. All was worn out—mind, body, and apparel. Despair has different depths of shade—all are dark, but some are blacker than others. The shadow it was casting in that humble little room, with its scanty furniture, its bare walls, its lonely aspect, was gradually deepening from the dusk of twilight to the thick gloom of night. The occupant of the room was not alone ; two

earnest eyes watched his face with wonder and inquiry, a tiny hand was laid upon his knee, the little figure of a child stood beside him.

“Papa.”

No answer.

“Papa, speak to me.”

“What shall I say, missy?”

“I want to know something,” said the child, heaving a sigh, and pausing for a second or two.

“When shall we go home?”

“Home, my darling? Is not this our home now?”

“I think it is not. Home was not like this.”

“Then you would like to leave me, Lizette, and go back to your old home?”

“No, papa, not without you. We must both go together, and look for mamma.”

“Nay, my child, but I shall go first, and leave you here with good old Margaret. Will not that be a better way? You will be satisfied to let me go to your mother, and stay here, like a good child, behind, till you are sent for.”

The great dark eyes of the little Lizette burned intensely—something of distrust appeared in their expression. She did not reply.

“Why do you not speak, missy?”

“Because I will not stay behind, papa. Mamma said she was only leaving us for a little while, and she has never come back since. If you go too, papa, you may never come back either—you must stay with me always.”

“But if somebody called me away to a home where I never should feel sorrow or pain any more, would you not let me go there?” demanded the father, in a low voice.

“Yes, if I went too,” was the prompt reply.

“Ah, Lizette, that is selfish,” murmured the father, smiling in spite of himself, as he stroked the little hand that was clasped within his own. “Surely you would not try to keep me here, if you thought I would be happier in another place, even though you may stay behind.”

“Oh, papa, don’t go!” cried the child imploringly. “I never, never could stay here with

Margaret, or anyone but you or mamma ; and I know mamma will never come back again."

Never again, indeed, poor child. You may go to her, but she will return no more to you. A long silence ensued, broken only by the scraping of a mouse at the wainscot, or the rustle of a falling ember. At length the shuffle of feet was heard outside the house, and a well-known rap at the door.

" That is Dillon Crosbie ! " exclaimed the child, starting up eagerly. " Light the candles, papa." The father rose hastily, and from a bare cupboard near the fire place, took out two old brass candlesticks, bearing some inches of the remains of mould candles, which, having lighted, he proceeded to admit the new comer. A boy about thirteen, tall for his years, entered the narrow hall, wearing a jacket of blue cloth, rather too small for him; his trousers also were shorter than they needed to be, exposing some inches of white stockings above a pair of large coarse shoes. The face of the lad was flushed, and not over

clean—an ink mark streaking one glowing cheek. His curly hair rose in luxuriant disorder over his forehead ; and in one red hand, hacked and disfigured by many a scratch and gash, he held a somewhat worn book.

“ Good evening, Mr. Stutzer,” he said, wiping his feet on the old worn mat at the door. “ I fear I am very late to-night.”

There was a frank heartiness in the boy’s voice that bespoke a cheerful, unreserved mind, and something of a fearless, independent, though still gentle nature.

“ No, Dillon, you are not late at all,” replied Mr. Stutzer, with a smile that lighted up his ghastly face with a pleasant beam.

“ How is your cold, sir ?” asked the boy, fixing his quick eye on Mr. Stutzer’s face, as they entered the sitting-room already introduced to the reader.

“ Better—or, at least, not worse, thank you.”

“ Here are some lozenges for your cough, sir,” observed the lad, drawing from his

pocket a little box. "I thought you might like them."

"I am much obliged to you," said Mr. Stutzer, giving another pleased smile, as he took the little offering.

Lizette stood at a distance, looking on, like a little coquette, hoping to be noticed, yet withal seeming very shy and indifferent. Dillon disappointed her by not looking towards her, for he was thinking of something else. When she saw him sitting down at the table, and opening his book at once with a business-like air, she felt a disagreeable feeling of being neglected and forgotten. Mr. Stutzer sat down also, and soon he and the boy were engaged in the translation of a German history, which occupied them for some time.

Dillon Crosbie, of half a dozen pupils, who for sometime had been under his tuition, was the only one still remaining with him. Ill health had of late obliged him to relinquish the instruction of so many boys, and he would have

also given up teaching young Crosbie, had he not found in him an extraordinary capacity for learning, coupled with much originality of character. All the time, however, that he could now devote to him, was an hour or so each evening, when he gave him lessons in French or German. The boy attended a day-school at Yaxley also, where he learned as much as the master of a rather inferior academy could teach him. Lizette sat on a low seat at the fire, silently and dejectedly, while the reading of the *Siebenjährigen Krieges* went on ; and it was only when Dillon prepared to shut his book up, that she ventured to look towards him.

“ I have a long way to go through this still, sir,” he observed, pressing together the leaves he had not yet read, which formed a very thick bulk. “ I won’t finish the book for some weeks, I think.”

Mr. Stutzer gave a faint smile, like the light of a moonbeam on a winter night.

“ What book shall I commence, sir, when I am done with it ? ”

"I cannot say—whoever you are reading with will choose one for you."

Dillon's head gave a little sudden jerk, and his eye looked inquiringly and anxiously into the master's face. For a long while he said nothing, but his glance wandered round the cheerless room, and fell upon the half dead embers in the grate. Until a few weeks back, Mr. Stutzer had always invited him to tea in the evenings; now he never did so, and a curious thought flashed into the boy's head, that probably Mr. Stutzer had no tea for himself or anyone else. At length he got up to go away; his air was abstracted and embarrassed. Lizette now came towards him, with a great effort of courage.

"Will you draw a picture for me, to-night?" she asked, timidly.

"Dillon is in a hurry, missy; do not trouble him," said her father.

"Oh, it isn't any trouble, sir," observed the boy, sitting down again.

The child ran for her paint-box and pencils,

and a sheet of paper ; and soon Master Crosbie was sketching off a very fierce tiger indeed, just about to pounce upon an unhappy individual within reach of him. Missy's delight was intense. A lion and a panther were drawn with the same speed, and in a manner betokening rather more boldness than accuracy of design, and then Dillon once more took up his book to depart, still looking grave and thoughtful. When he was gone Mr. Stutzer extinguished one of the candles, and going to the cupboard, took from it a cup of milk and piece of stale bread, both of which he gave to the child for her supper. After which an old, half-blind woman, whose face was a mass of wrinkles, made her appearance, and Missy was borne off to bed.

CHAPTER II.

A SKETCH OF THE PAST.

FEW people at Yaxley knew much about Paul Stutzer, nor did anybody feel particularly curious to ascertain his affairs. He was merely a teacher of languages, not often seen out of doors; but when seen, dressed shabbily, and of careworn appearance. There was nothing wonderful in that. Who are so shabby and careworn looking as the instructors of youth? He was always at church on Sundays—he and his little girl sitting sometimes in one pew, sometimes in another, wherever the Sexton chose to place them.

Yaxley was a healthy neighbourhood. Strangers not unfrequently came there for change of air, and to drink of a certain cold spa among the hills. Paul Stutzer arrived there in the summer time, when the leaves were on the trees, and the days long and warm. There was nothing mysterious in his coming there. He had committed no crime—was guilty of no political offence—he was not anybody in disguise. He was simply Paul Stutzer, teacher of languages. The old lady, Mrs. Meiklam, living at Meiklam's Rest, about a mile from Yaxley, knew more of him than any one else in the vicinity; and what she knew was this. Just before he arrived, she received a letter from an old friend in the north of England, recommending him to her notice and patronage; and it was through her influence that he procured his first pupil at Yaxley—Dillon Crosbie. Alone in the world, without known kith or kin, Paul Stutzer had struggled from early childhood. His father was a native of Germany, and had held for some years the

situation of Professor of the German Language in one of our English colleges. Extravagant and thoughtless, he died in poverty ; and his only child might have gone to the workhouse had not strangers pitied him. He was sent to a charity school, where his abilities attracted notice. Then he was placed under the tuition of the master of a respectable academy where young gentlemen were educated, and where his cleverness also became remarkable. From thence, under the patronage of the person who had first rescued him from workhouse oblivion, he was promoted to Cambridge, where it was hoped he would shine brilliantly. Well, he did shine, for a time, at least ; and then, in a luckless hour, he fell in love, and married, sorely against his patron's consent. His wife was not pretty, but gentle, and of winning manners, and, unhappily, full of romantic ideas. They married ; and thenceforward Paul Stutzer's prospects grew black. Enraged at what he considered the bitterest ingratitude, his patron discarded for

ever both the offending parties ; and then, away in a remote spot of the North of England, Paul and his wife began life on their own account. They set up a school, and at one time had thirty day-scholars and twelve boarders. Things went on pretty smoothly for a long while, till Mrs. Stutzer's health began to give way under too much exertion. Boys were unruly and difficult to manage. It required a much more sturdy-minded individual than she was to fulfil the duties of a schoolmaster's wife. There was continual noise in the house, and shouting, and tramping up and down stairs, and swinging over banisters, and hanging from the two great trees in the play-ground. Naturally nervous, the poor woman was always dreading some accident, and her heart beat violently at any extra noise. Perhaps it was a presentiment of evil.

“ Paul, I cannot rest easily in my bed often,” she said, “ for I feel that we have great responsibility in the care of so many people's children.

Would it not be frightful if any of our boys died while under our roof ? ”

“ We must bear whatever happens,” replied the husband. “ Let us do our duty, and we need not have anything to reproach ourselves with.”

As in most schools, there was one boy in the community worse than all the rest—a tyrant over weaker lads—a leader of all that was mischievous.

One bright summer evening, there was quarrelling between this boy and a delicate, but obstinate youth, who always made a point of never giving in, in any cause of dispute. One frightful blow on the temple laid this lad prostrate; no blood was shed outwardly, but the blow was mortal. There was a rushing wildly to the house of many frightened boys—a rushing that the schoolmaster’s wife never afterwards forgot, and then the lifeless body of the poor, dying youth was borne within, and laid upon a bed, solemnly and tearfully. He died that same night, and the school of Paul

Stutzer received a great blow. People blamed him for the misfortune that had occurred. What sort of a master was he who allowed boxing unto death in his establishment? The county newspapers took the matter up, glad, probably, to have anything to write about; and at length, poor Stutzer was a marked man—looked upon as little better than a murderer. The boy who was the cause of this misfortune went home, and being the son of an influential man, escaped punishment. It was only the school-master that was responsible for the occurrence. One by one boys were withdrawn from so disreputable an academy. Paul and his wife and child were in danger of starvation, when a somewhat eccentric aunt of Mrs. Stutzer, who for years had held no communication with her, invited them all to her house. Gladly they repaired there, but soon found their hostess by no means a pleasant one. Violent in her temper and unreasonable in her demands, she succeeded in worrying her niece, already in delicate health, to the verge of the

grave, and they were forced to leave the refuge of such a home. Mrs. Stutzer did not long survive ; she died in the obscure village of Climsley, on the borders of Yorkshire ; and the Curate of the parish, who was interested in her husband, was the person who wrote for him a letter of recommendation to Mrs. Meiklam, at Yaxley, whither Paul thought of repairing for the benefit of his own health after his wife's death.

This then, was the history of the teacher of languages in the humble cottage in the suburbs of the town of Yaxley. If unfortunate in the world, had he not many equals ? If judged harshly and wrongfully, have not others been likewise judged ? But Paul Stutzer was not a philosopher. Over sensitive, shy, shrinking, ashamed to ask favours, lest he should be refused —gladly would he have met death, but for the poor little Lizette, who implored him to stay with her. And yet this weak man was not without his strength—strength to resist temptation. In the silent hours of a night of intense misery

and despair was he not strong when he broke a phial of laudanum, and let its contents pour into the fire? Strong you would acknowledge, if you knew how great was the temptation to use it otherwise. No, he was not so cowardly as he might have been. His misery was indeed great—it might be yet greater—it *must* be greater; but the life that God gave must be revered: it was not his own to meddle with. It is easy to preach resignation to the poor mortal quivering under the rod of affliction—easy to say, “You must bear up;” but, oh, bard, very hard, to practise it. The warrior on the battle-field, brave as he may be, is yet often far less a hero than the patient, suffering creature who is *living* out his misery in the prison or the garret, murmuring, with pale lips, the words, “Thy will be done.”

CHAPTER III.

REMONSTRANCES AND COAXINGS.

IT was a wild night; the wind blew in shrill gusts, and ever and anon showers of sleet came dripping from the cold gray sky. A bright fire blazed in a comfortably furnished sitting-room, where the tea-tray still remained on the table, though the occupants of the apartment had for some time partaken of their evening meal. A fat, middle-aged gentleman was reclining, half asleep, in an arm-chair before the fire, a thin, sharp-featured lady was doing fancy work at a little table, upon which stood a lamp, and a girl,

about eleven years old, was alternately playing with pussy on the rug and running to look out of the window, rather anxiously, at the thick gloom without. She was a pretty child, with much of brightness and intellect in her face. A peculiar expression of sweetness played about her mouth and beamed in the depths of her eyes; her slight and graceful figure gave promise of much future loveliness; while the very small hands and feet, as well as the noble carriage of the perfectly shaped little head, round which a profusion of hair hung in curls, gave a charming distinction to her appearance.

"I wonder what keeps Dillon out so late to-night, mamma," she observed, as she once again drew aside the heavy folds of the crimson curtains that hung over the window, and gazed upon the blackness outside.

"I don't know, indeed," replied the lady at the work-table, in a sharp, dry voice; "but if he isn't in soon I shall send the tea-tray away. I must put a stop to this reading of German, and

going out in the night; he'll catch cold, and then I shall have pretty trouble with him. What good will all this reading do him. If he is so anxious to learn languages, could not Miss Pritty teach him along with you?"

"But then he is at school every day when Miss Pritty comes to me," said the little girl; "and he cannot go any earlier than he does, the dinner-hour is so late."

The mother drew out her watch with impatience.

"It is a quarter-past nine; I must have the tea-things removed."

"Oh, mamma, wait a little while; he must soon come now."

"No, no, not a moment longer; he may do without supper when he stays out so late. I daresay he has had tea with that man."

The bell was rung, a servant appeared, and the tea-tray was borne from the room. For a moment a sorrowful shade passed over the little girl's eyes, but shadows never lingered there

long. Soon after, the ringing of the hall-door bell announced an arrival.

"Now, mamma, I want you not to scold Dillon, when he comes up," said the child, running quickly to her mother's side.

"Get away, Bessie, you have made me make a wrong stitch," said the mother, impatiently. "I wish you could be more gentle, and not startle me in that way."

Bessie had not time to make any apology before the door opened, and in came our friend Dillon Crosbie, looking, with regard to apparel, much as he had done, when first introduced to the reader, though perhaps less ruddy of complexion than upon that evening.

"I suppose you have had supper," remarked the sharp-faced lady at the work-table, as he entered; "so I sent away the tea-things."

"No, I have not."

"Then what made you stay out so late?"

"Mr. Stutzer was ill," said Dillon, flinging himself on the sofa. "I thought he was dying,

and I was obliged to run for Dr. Ryder to come to him ; that was what kept me out so late.”

“ What ailed him ? ” demanded the lady, in a tone of slight hostility.

“ I hardly know ; he fainted just after I had finished reading with him, and I thought he was dead.”

“ Dead ! ” repeated the lady. “ How could you be so silly ? I daresay he will not thank you for calling in a doctor, if it was only a faint, putting him to expense for nothing. The heat of the fire, or something else, I suppose affected him.”

“ It wasn’t the heat of the fire, anyway,” said Dillon, smiling, in spite of himself, “ for I don’t think there was a spark in the grate. I never was colder in my life.”

“ That is very odd. I should think he ought to have a fire at least for the short time you are with him,” observed the lady, going on with her work. “ I don’t think it is respectful to you to treat you so.”

"Oh, I don't care about a fire, aunt," said the boy, good-humouredly.

"Won't you have some supper?" asked Bessie, in a low voice, coming towards him, and pushing the curls from his cold forehead with her small hands.

"No," he whispered; "I am not hungry."

"I will get you some milk and bread in a moment."

"You need not, indeed, Bessie; I could not eat to-night."

"You are not offended because mamma sent away the tea-things?" asked the little girl, after a pause, as her mother left the room.

"Offended!" repeated Dillon, looking a little amused. "No; why should I be, when I stayed so late?"

"Well, why will you not have any supper?"

"I don't want any."

Bessie thought Dillon's eyes looked as if he had a cold; he was biting his lip pretty hard, too. What if her mother's treatment had really

annoyed him? For a long while she said nothing; but her glance was directed ever and anon to the figure of Dillon on the sofa.

“Bessie,” he said, at last, “I am convinced that Mr. Stutzer has got nothing to eat. I know quite well he is starving.”

“Why?”

“Because Dr. Ryder said so; and I know there was nothing in his cupboard but a small piece of bread and cup of milk, when I was searching for some wine that the doctor told me to look for, while Mr. Stutzer was insensible.”

“But he might not keep his food in the cupboard,” said Bessie, gravely.

“There was nothing eatable anywhere, in the kitchen, or any place else in the house, except some brown bread that his old servant said belonged to her. She is a very stupid woman; but she told Dr. Ryder she hadn’t bought any meat for Mr. Stutzer for nearly a fortnight, and that he never now had any regular breakfast or dinner. She said she didn’t think he cared for having regular

meals, on account of his delicate health; but I know very well he is too poor to buy food. Dr. Ryder said he had fainted from weakness and want of proper nourishment."

Dillon got up and walked about the room, trying very hard to repress the tears that were fast rushing to his eyes; but he had mastered his feelings so far as to seem calm enough when his aunt came back. Bessie could not altogether sympathize with his sorrow for his poor tutor; she thought it very shocking, of course, for a man to be starving; but Dillon felt something more than mere pity for the gentle-spirited man, who had taken much pains in teaching him, and whose deep learning and high order of intellect even boys knew how to appreciate.

"Oh, mamma, Dillon says Mr. Stutzer is so poor he has nothing to eat," observed Bessie, when her mother was again seated at the little work-table, busily engaged in the design of a Berlin-wool man, with square features.

“How does that happen? I fancy he is something of a miser.”

“No, indeed, aunt,” said Dillon, dejectedly, “Dr. Ryder says he is sinking from positive starvation.”

“Well, it is not the first time misers have starved themselves. I have read of many cases of the kind. There was old Dan Ripton, who lived for years like a beggar, and in the end died worth several thousand pounds.”

Dillon silently hoped this notion about misers would go out of his aunt’s head; he thereupon waited some minutes before renewing the conversation. The old gentleman asleep before the fire continued snoring in different keys and tones all the while; once starting up suddenly for an instant with a quick, bewildered inquiry, “What are you all about? Who’s dying?” and then relapsing to slumber without receiving any answer or attention.

“What made Dr. Ryder fancy that the man

did not get enough to eat?" asked the sharp lady, after a pause.

"I suppose he looked so thin."

"Pooh! there are many thin people that eat plenty. I recollect hearing of a man who could eat a leg of mutton at a meal, and yet looked like a skeleton."

"But Mr. Stutzer's servant says he never buys any meat now," observed Bessie.

"Who would mind what a servant said? Very likely they are all in a league together, wanting to excite pity. For myself I never approved of having anything to do with that man; but you know Mrs. Meiklam would force us to employ him, and here you see is the end of it. Pretending indeed to teach you out of compliment, and disappointing all the other boys' fathers and mothers by saying he wasn't able to continue his instructions to them. Why should he make any difference between you and the rest of the pupils? Depend upon it, he has some view in it."

Dillon was quick-witted enough, yet, somehow,

he rarely—very rarely—made a sharp answer. Nobody knew better when people were talking unreasonably; but nobody knew better how to hold his tongue in the right place.

"It is very odd he has no respectable friends to help him if he is so poor," continued the aunt; "I never trust these wonderful stories of poverty and starvation."

"I think Mr. Stutzer is ashamed to let people know how poor he is," replied Dillon. "Dr. Ryder told me not to let him find out that we thought he had no food or money."

"What good would that do him?" inquired the lady, taking a fresh needleful of wool, for she was now shading an angular arm.

"I suppose Dr. Ryder thought he would feel so much ashamed."

"How ridiculous! As if a man could expect to die of starvation without people finding it out. It would save a great deal of trouble if the poor would just seek relief at the workhouse at once, instead of holding out on charity till every one's

patience is worn out. Depend upon it, if people come to poverty, they deserve it. I never knew anyone that didn't. There was old Nancy Perkins, who was found dead in the streets one morning, and she had brought herself to beggary by drunkenness. She would sell the clothes off her back for gin ; and hundreds of others the same. There is no believing anything that these paupers say. I have been deceived over and over again by plausible stories."

Dillon went back to the sofa and held his peace. Bessie watched him anxiously.

"Mamma, could we not send Mr. Stutzer something ?" she asked gently.

"Send him what?"

"Anything nice ; a chicken, or some *blanc mange*?"

"Or some pickled oysters or salmon, aunt!" broke in Dillon, eagerly, starting up.

"Oh, aunt, do ; I wish you would."

"Yes, mamma, I know you will ; you can't

refuse; you will give us leave to make up a nice present for the poor man."

"*Blanc mange!* Pickled oysters!" exclaimed the mother, in slow, emphatic tones. "Pretty thing, indeed. What is he to me that I should be expected to support him! I have not the slightest idea of doing so."

"Oh, mamma, you know you will, when I wish it," said Bessie, who knew, alas! too well, her own power. "Dillon and I must have our own way this once."

"There is some cheese there in the pantry this long time that you may take to him if you like, and some slices of cold mutton; but I intended them for old Jenny Black."

"That would affront him, aunt," said Dillon, gloomily.

"Why, mamma, he would think we thought him a common beggar, if we sent him that," observed Bessie, whose chief aim in these charitable suggestions was to please her cousin Dillon.

“And what is he starving for, if he won’t eat anything he gets?”

“A sick man couldn’t eat cold mutton or cheese,” murmured Dillon.

“Well, I don’t care; he ought to be glad to get anything, if he is so poor as you want to make me believe.”

“Give me the key of the larder, mamma,” demanded Bessie, in a tone that showed she was very much in the habit of having her own way; “Dillon and I will make a survey of the good things there, and I shall pack a little basket for him to carry to Mr. Stutzer, on his way to school to-morrow.”

“I shall do no such thing. Who is this foreigner, that we should be expected to feed him up and pamper him?”

“Oh, mamma, I have got the key!” exclaimed Bessie, laughing, as she put her little hand into the small basket on her mother’s work-table. “Come, now, let us all go down to the larder,” and the wayward girl ran merrily to the door.

Her mother rose hastily to follow, scolding, frowning, and smiling by turns; but Bessie far outstripped her, and had reached the lower depths of the house ere she was down the first flight of stairs. Dillon followed also; and he and his aunt had just arrived at the larder door as Bessie was contemplating a dish of collared eels, and a cold roasted partridge lying on a shelf before her. What wonderful things were in that cool and somewhat damp pantry—what a medley of different odours—what bottles of bright coloured liquids—what mysterious crocks tied down with brown paper coverings!

“Mamma, this partridge will just do, and some of the oysters in that jar up there. Now, please, do not look so cross. You will let me do as I like this once, like a dear mother, and say we may have them.”

The mother scolded, grumbled, remonstrated; Dillon and Bessie entreated; and, finally, they were permitted to fill a little basket with different good things suitable for a delicate appetite.

The cold partridge went in first, then a pot of marmalade, and then a small jar of pickled oysters, which Bessie tied down very neatly with her own fair hands, while her mother looked on, prophesying that Dillon would break the things carrying them, and that Mr. Stutzer would not thank anybody for anything. Dillon looked happy at last. He grew rather hungry, too, while looking at all the good things in the pantry; but he did not ask for any supper that night. Up to his cold bedroom, far away at the top of the large house, he repaired thoughtfully. The moon was shining brightly now, and it, and the clouds after it, seemed rushing before the wind at a furious pace. Opening the window the boy looked out, leaning on his elbows. He could see the town, and the church spire, and the pavement beneath glistening with the lately fallen rain; he could see the gas-lamps, looking blurred and dim, dotting the streets; but it was not of these things he was thinking. He liked the cold wind blowing on his forehead, and that was why

he leaned there looking out. His meditations were not of tops or dogs, or a new suit of clothes, or even of supper, but simply of his tutor, Mr. Stutzer.

CHAPTER IV.

DILLON CROSBIE.

AND what is Dillon Crosbie doing in his aunt's house? Has he no other home? He has not. The fat gentleman whom we found dozing at the parlour fire was his mother's only brother; he had been much older than she was, and he had always regarded her rather as a father than a brother. At seventeen she married, as everybody thought, in a very promising way, and became the wife of a dashing and handsome Captain, Bagwell Crosbie, of the — Dragoons, who had the name of large estates in Ireland—the name,

but certainly not the gain, the property being heavily mortgaged, even in his father's lifetime. Mrs. Crosbie's fortune was considerable, but it did not suffice to pay her husband's debts. Crosbie Court was a fine old Irish mansion, and required numerous servants. There were carriages, and horses and dogs to be kept up, and Captain Crosbie found it hard to retrench his expenses. His father and grandfathers had always been hospitable and leading people in their county. How could he bring himself to sink down into obscurity? He could not bring himself to it, but others did it for him. Creditors accumulated; they clamoured for payment; the estates were not entailed: one by one they were sold off; and even Mrs. Crosbie was induced to give up her marriage settlement to save her husband's honour. Sorrowfully Captain Crosbie, with his wife and little son, Dillon, left his once splendid home to settle down in an obscure lodging in Dublin, where he lived but a few months, a stroke of paralysis carrying him off suddenly, while yet in the prime of

life. Old Mr. Pilmer—Mrs. Crosbie's father—had refused to help his son-in-law in his misfortunes. He had given his daughter a large fortune, and was determined he would do nothing more for her. Arthur Pilmer, the brother, would gladly have rendered her assistance, but, unfortunately, he had never been a favourite with his father, who, though he had given him no profession, allowed him so small an income during his lifetime, that he could neither marry himself, nor help his married sister. When the old gentleman died, he left all his money to his son Arthur, the will being dated several years back, at a time when the Crosbies were supposed to be well enough off, and before Dillon was born. Immediately on coming into possession of a large fortune, Arthur Pilmer determined to render assistance to his sister. He set off at once for Ireland, where, to his infinite grief, he found Mrs. Crosbie in the last stage of consumption. It was too late to do anything for her beyond soothing her dying moments by assurances of protecting her boy, and

providing for him as a gentleman. He waited in Dublin till the grave opened to receive his sister, and then went back to England, accompanied by his young nephew, then about two years old. Marrying almost immediately, Mr. Pilmer determined that Dillon should always find a home under his roof. He always treated him with kindness; but he was an indolent man, easily influenced by any spirit more energetic than his own, and, unfortunately, his wife was by no means of a charitable disposition. The boy, from the wreck of his father's fortune, possessed only six hundred pounds in the world; and this sum being invested in Government funds, at three per cent., produced an interest of eighteen pounds a year, which helped to pay for his schooling and clothes. But his aunt was the most economical of women, and she sometimes thought it hard to be obliged to support a great boy, who consumed nearly three times as much as her daughter Bessie; and being determined that his clothes should cost as little as possible, she always got

them made by the cheapest tailors, while orders were given that his shoes should be made a size larger than the dimensions of his feet, lest the latter should grow more quickly than the former wore out. Dillon did not like to be dressed worse than other lads, but he was not of a nature given to grumbling or murmuring. He never fancied he was not understood or appreciated ; he never entertained dark thoughts of running away from his uncle's house, and turning sailor, or soldier, or scavenger, or anything else likely to improve his temporal condition. Yet, he was not wanting in proper spirit. He never cringed to any one, though he never felt that he ought to be unhappy because he was depending on people who were not his parents. Perhaps he knew that he had strong arms and legs, and a healthy frame, and that, even if his uncle and aunt turned him adrift, he could earn a livelihood by some means. The boys at school at first laughed at his dress, but he laughed himself too, and then the merriment ceased to be an excitement. It could not vex him,

so its aim was frustrated. His superior size and strength, and his well-known courage, prevented his schoolfellows from thinking his good-humour was assumed from fear. There was not a boy at Mr. Benson's academy that he could not have beaten, had he been engaged in a boxing match. Once, and only once, he had been exasperated to enter into combat at the school, his antagonist being a much older and larger boy than himself. The renown of this fight lived long at the school, owing to the remarkable strength of both combatants. Dillon's foe was Tom Ryder, the only son of the chief physician at Yaxley—a young gentleman notorious for being a bully, and regarded as generally formidable. On this memorable day he was tormenting a lame boy—a parlour boarder at the school—when Dillon Crosbie, roused to a pitch of indignation, became the little fellow's champion. A grand combat ensued. Shouts rose on the air as the fight waxed vigorous. “Hurrah, Crosbie!” “Well done, Ryder!” burst from admiring lookers on, as each antag-

onist seemed rising in the ascendant; but finally, the triumphant cries grew more enthusiastic, as Dillon proved himself the victor, while Tom Ryder lay flat on the ground. For some time a coolness naturally existed between Ryder and Crosbie, but it soon passed away, and they were friends again, little knowing how greatly they would interfere with each other in after life. Curiously enough, from that day Tom's father admired his son's conqueror, for he heard all about the fight, and the cause of it, and Doctor Ryder was a generous hearted man.

"Never fight, Dillon," he said, "except in a cause like that—it is the only one justifiable," and the herculean physician coughed violently, running his fingers through his bushy hair.

On the whole, young Crosbie got on very well at Mr. Benson's, without thinking much about it, for he did not spend much time thinking of himself in any respect. It was well that nature had so far gifted him, for no careful training had been resorted to at home to form his mind. His uncle

though kind-hearted, was indolent, and knew nothing whatever of educating youth ; while his wife, though over careful about household matters and all worldly affairs, never dreamed of such a thing as moulding the principles of either her own children or her nephew. Bessie was her especial pet and darling, the only creature on earth round whom her heart was twined very closely ; yet she was not always gentle to her. The poor child was scolded and petted by turns—rarely ever permitted to do anything without a sort of sham combat, which always ended in her gaining her own way. Bessie knew this well, and her mother's "No" might as well have been "Yes" for all she valued it. Yet nature had also gifted her largely ; her disposition was of a fine order—her feelings quick—her delicacy of mind remarkable. How often do we find such children where they could be least expected—growing up in ungenial spots—surrounded by circumstances of adverse kind ! Like plants of a rare order springing up in some uncultivated garden, whose

owner does not understand their value, Dillon and Bessie, in some mysterious way, grew from day to day, perfectly unlike any one round them. The latter enjoyed all the privileges of an only child—her younger sister, Mary, having resided since early childhood with a wealthy godmother—a Mrs. Devenish—who was a distant relative of Mrs. Pilmer, and who, having no children of her own, was a person not to be disregarded, when she requested permission to keep her little goddaughter from year to year under her roof as her own child. Mrs. Pilmer, after a few natural scruples, consented to the arrangement; and it was only as a visitor that little Mary Pilmer made her appearance once a year, or so, at her parents' house at Yaxley, accompanied by her very pompous godmother, who always travelled in her own carriage, and brought with her her own servants, when she made her advent at the Pilmer's residence. Bessie had strong feelings; she loved her father and mother with intensity, and her cousin Dillon also held a high place in her

affections. Often she was pained by her mother's treatment of him. Many a bitter tear she shed when she felt that he was too severely punished for any childish misdemeanour. Dillon loved her too—they were as confidential as brother and sister—rarely quarrelling, though Bessie was often inclined to be tyrannical in planning games and plays, and having her own way in all their sports. Indeed, an occasional fear shot across the very shrewd mind of Mrs. Pilmer that this affection might possibly ripen into a deeper feeling as time wore on.

CHAPTER V.

THE PRESENT TO THE SICK MAN.

DILLON got up very early next day, and dressed more briskly than usual. He hurriedly took his breakfast—some slices of bread and a bowl of milk which had been left as usual for him on the parlour sideboard the night before—for the family breakfast-hour at the Pilmers' house was a very late one, and the lad was generally long at school before his uncle's morning repast had commenced. Bessie had been careful to place the well-filled basket also on the sideboard ; and it was with a pleasant feeling that Dillon shut the hall-door after him that day—his books fastened together by a

strap, in one hand—the basket in the other. How cold it was ! A thick carpet of snow lay on the ground ; sparrows were twittering and fluttering on the house-tops as he came into the town, which was within a few minutes' walk of his uncle's villa in the suburbs. The clear blue sky looked very frosty—all was bright, white, and icy. His shoes sank with a crisp, crackling sound into the snow, leaving large footprints in it ; his hands were redder than ever—his nose quite blue. Now and then he paused in his swift course, and laid his books down, to have a fling at a wood-pecker or blackbird hovering in the outskirts of the town—now and then he made a snowball and sent it flying at some particular point of aim, and then he sped on, all the swifter, to make up for time lost. As he neared the cottage where Mr. Stutzer lived, his pace slackened ; and on arriving finally at the door, he waited a moment before lifting the knocker : then he rapped gently. The old, half blind woman, Margaret Spurs, made her appearance, looking much as usual.

"How is Mr. Stutzer?" he asked, shaking the snow off his feet on the mat.

"What?" in a loud, slightly angry tone.

"How is Mr. Stutzer this morning?" repeated the boy very distinctly.

"Not much different, I believe."

"Can I see him?"

"Can you *what?*" very frowningly was demanded, as if Dillon had made some reprehensible request.

"See him!" shouted the lad.

"You needn't bawl so loud. I'm not deaf if you'd speak plain. I don't know whether you can see him or not. I'll ask," and the old woman hobbled away. She returned as soon as could be expected from her leisurely movements, and informed Dillon that he might walk in. He approached the little parlour where he had always been accustomed to find Mr. Stutzer.

"He isn't there," said the old woman.

"Where is he, then?"

"In his own room—where else?"

"But did he say that I might go to him?" asked the boy hesitatingly.

"Oh, he said nothing of that."

"Of what?"

"Of his going anywhere."

Dillon would have laughed if he had been in a laughing mood, but he merely asked his question over again.

"Yes; he said you might go to him—but don't stop long—the doctor said last night he wasn't to talk much."

With a grave face the boy bent his steps towards the sick room, trying to walk as softly as his shoes would permit, but the heavy soles come down with unexpected creaks, in spite of his efforts. At last he had reached his destination. He found Mr. Stutzer, dressed, even to his boots, but lying on his bed. He smiled as the boy entered, and for a moment a faint red hue stole over his face, leaving it, when gone, so white that it almost seemed to glisten.

"Good morning, sir. I hope you feel better," said Dillon, taking the cold hand extended to him.

"I think I do," replied Mr. Stutzer.

His young friend now stood rather awkwardly, with his basket in his hand, not knowing how he had best begin to speak of the presents it contained.

"My uncle—no, my aunt, sent you a few things here, sir, which he—she thought you might like," he said, after a long pause, looking confused, and twirling the basket.

"I am much obliged to them," replied Mr. Stutzer, thinking he had better thank in the plural. "What are they, Dillon?"

"Some marmalade and a chicken—no, a partridge—and oysters, sir."

Again that faint shade of red on the sunken cheek. Was it summoned there by pleasure or by pain?

"Thank you, Dillon—thank your aunt very much for me."

“ Yes, sir,” said Dillon, very softly, laying down the basket on a table beside the bed, on which rested some phials—those sinister little adornments of the invalid’s room.

Two little feet were now heard pattering towards the chamber. The child Lizette stood in the doorway, looking through it, half smilingly, half timidly.

“ Come in, missy,” said her father.

“ Come,” added Dillon, going towards her, “ won’t you say good morning?”

“ Yes ; but why are you here so early?” asked the little girl, raising her large eyes inquiringly to the boy’s face. “ Did you bring that basket? What is in it?”

“ Show her,” said Mr. Stutzer.

Dillon took up the cover and explained the contents.

“ And you brought all these to papa?” said the child, looking with awe and admiration at the lad. “ Where did you get the money to pay for them?”

"Oh, Lizette, do not ask questions," said Mr. Stutzer, colouring.

"I did not pay for them, missy," said Dillon, good-humouredly. "I haven't any money—they all belonged to my aunt."

"Then you are poor, like me?" observed Lizette, looking as if she felt herself on an equality with Master Crosbie.

"I'll come again to see you in the evening," said Dillon, as he was going away.

"Yes; and you may bring your books also. Perhaps I may be able to hear you read."

"I hope you may, sir. Good morning," and he left the room. Lizette followed him.

"Will you tell me something?" she whispered.

"Yes—if I can," said Dillon, smiling at her earnestness.

"Is papa thinking of going away from this?"

"I don't know—why do you ask?"

"Because I think he is; he intends to leave me behind and go to mamma."

"How do you know?"

“ He told me so. Who is the messenger that is coming for him ?”

“ What messenger ?” asked the boy, looking rather bewildered.

“ The messenger that came for mamma. Will you tell papa to send him away when he comes ? I won’t stay here without him. Tell papa not to leave me.”

“ I am sure he won’t, if he can help it,” said Dillon, beginning to understand something of her meaning ; “ but if the messenger comes, Lizette, he will have to go with him.”

“ Can’t he run away or hide ?” asked the child, her eyes burning darkly.

“ Good-bye, missy—have you my pictures safe ?” said the boy, changing the conversation ; and then, without waiting for a reply, he opened the hall-door and went out.

“ What are you doing here ?” demanded old Margaret, grasping the child by the arm, as she found her standing close to the hall-door long afterwards.

"Don't let anybody in that comes but Doctor Ryder and Master Crosbie," said the child.

"Get along there to your breakfast. Drat the child—what a plague she is! Come, what are you watching for? I'll give your bread and milk to the cat if you don't do as you are bid. How you drag the life out o' me! Ugh! I'd rather be breaking stones."

Meekly enough, Lizette went to the kitchen, where she ate her morning repast, looking very often out of the barred window with the bull's-eyed panes, for some being who she fancied was coming to do her an injury.

"Be quick! be quick!" shouted the old woman impatiently, as the child lingered over her breakfast. Lizette was indulging in the projection of a scheme for baffling her dreaded enemy. Could not doors and windows be defended against all invasion of intruders? Couldn't Margaret say her father was not at home if any unwelcome visitor came to him?

Her father, meanwhile, on his bed upstairs,

lay for a long while without stirring. Then he got up, and looked at the things in the basket near him, taking them out one by one, and putting each on the table. There was the partridge lying on a little plate, very brown and tempting, then the little jar of oysters and the pot of marmalade. Ah, they were all very good, but he could not try anything. Some draughts that Doctor Ryder sent last night and that morning seemed to revive him more than anything else; they were very bitter, but they gave a pleasant, warm sensation—quite an exhilaration of spirits. The truth was, they were nearly altogether composed of good port wine, drawn from the well-stocked cellar of the Yaxley physician, and disguised by various spices and a few drops of bitter essence, to make them taste like medicine.

“How am I to pay for it?” was the question that always rose to the sick man’s mind, as he took the hourly draught prescribed. Yet he was not utterly without money—there was a solitary five-pound note laid carefully by, which he had

hoped he might not have been called upon to spend. Months ago it had been set aside to pay for his own burial ; and besides that, he possessed a sovereign or two, which were to be doled out, little by little, for his child's food, as long as they would last. A doctor's fee was a heavy sum, and medicine too was expensive. He feared the treasured five pounds must soon be changed. As in many other ways Paul Stutzer had been over tasking his strength for some weeks back, in the denial of proper nourishment, and now the dread reality forced itself upon him, that human nature was sinking almost beyond relief. What of his orphan child, left to a pitiless world! Would the doors of a workhouse receive her, his precious darling, whose birth, long after his marriage, had been so joyously welcomed in his home at Climsley? Would the delicate little form have to bear coarse hardships? Would she learn to speak the language of peasants, and earn her bread as a menial? Had he not vexed her grand-aunt, by proudly withdrawing his wife

and child from her house, because she wished to tyrannize over them all three, how different might matters now be. Would it not have been better if he had humbly borne every slight, every rude speech, every taunt, rather than now feel that his child would soon have no friend in the world? Could he not still beg, crave, humbly crave for her? Yes, he might write such a letter as it must move any woman's heart to read. He *would* write such a letter. Poor Paul! Ah! the spirit might be willing, but the flesh was very, very weak. No more, no more, would those thin fingers guide pen and ink! The messenger was, indeed, coming swiftly.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WALK IN THE SNOW.—THE MALEDICTION.

DILLON did not stay to play after school that day. The boys were making snow-balls and snow figures of large dimensions in the play-ground, but he contented himself by merely pelting half a dozen balls at his comrades, and receiving a considerable payment in return. He did not feel disposed for fun that afternoon, and rather earlier than usual he went home, intending to read quietly till the hour would arrive for him to proceed once more to Mr. Stutzer's cottage. The moment he entered the house Bessie ran down

the stairs, equipped in bonnet and pelisse, followed by her mother, who was uttering dreary lamentations, mingled with sharp bursts of scolding.

“ You headstrong girl, I won’t allow it, indeed ! Such a day—snow ankle deep on the ground ! It is the greatest folly I ever heard of ! Put it out of your head, miss.”

“ Yes, mamma, I will put the snow quite out of my head,” said Bessie, turning her laughing face towards her mother. “ I will completely forget there is such a thing. Dear mamma, go back, upstairs, and say I may go. What is the use of looking so cross ! Can’t you let me have my own way this once, Dillon, put your cap on—you are coming out with me.”

“ What am I to do with such a child ! ” exclaimed the exasperated mother. “ I can assure you, I won’t nurse you when you come back to me, coughing and sneezing—don’t imagine I will. You are a disobedient, ungrateful child.”

“Are your shoes strong?” asked Dillon, looking somewhat doubtfully at Bessie’s feet.

“No, but they will do very well—I don’t mind the snow in the least.”

“It’s very deep then,” murmured Dillon.

“Well, perhaps, I may put on over-shoes. Mamma bring me down my over-shoes.”

“No, I shall not. It is against my consent that you go out.”

“Then, I must only go for them myself,” said the incorrigible Bessie, preparing for a rush to the upper regions of the house.

“Stay there. You don’t know where they are,” returned Mrs. Pilmer. “I must fetch them myself.” And the poor woman hastened to a remote closet for the requisite shoes, while Bessie composedly sat down on a hall-chair, as if nothing remarkable was going on—and, indeed, neither there was, as far as she was concerned.

Dillon stood shivering beside her.

“Where are you going to, Bessie?”

“To Mrs. Meiklam’s. She sent Bingham with

a book to mamma, and a message, saying she would send the pony phaeton for us, only the snow was so deep, as she would like us to spend the day with her. Now, you know," continued Bessie, putting out her small hand, and looking uncommonly logical, "that meant that she wanted to see us; and though a pony mightn't be able to trot in the snow, I can walk very well in it, and you can walk. So we'll have great fun going to the Rest. How is Mr. Stutzer?—you know Mrs. Meiklam will be asking for him."

"I'm afraid he's very ill still."

"Poor old man!"

"He isn't an old man," said Dillon, a little indignantly.

"Is he not? How long mamma does stay with those shoes! I shall be off without them."

But Mrs. Pilmer was now heard approaching, and down she came, bearing with the required articles some extra pieces of muffling. With her own hands she enveloped her child's feet, the tiniest and prettiest of feet, in the overshoes,

warning her in a tone of assumed asperity to be sure to walk where the snow was shovelled off the pathways, and finally tying a large comforter round her neck. Bessie kissed her mother, and thanked her, saying she would be sure to give her love to Mrs. Meiklam; and then sallied forth, followed by Dillon, who was evidently a good deal disconcerted at the idea of this unexpected excursion in the snow. Mrs. Pilmer held open the hall-door for a long time, watching the agile and beautiful figure of her daughter, who turned her head, when advanced a little way, and kissed her hand to her. The mother thought her child very lovely indeed. Bessie was charmed with the snow, and nothing but Dillon's superior sense of propriety would have prevented her from pelting him with snow-balls along the way. Mrs. Meiklam lived about a mile off. She was an old lady, distantly related to Mr. Pilmer, who had received many substantial marks of favour from her in his father's lifetime, when his paternal allowance ran short. A remarkable

feature in this woman's character was her love of children. In the early years of her married life she had lost all her own little ones—bright, beautiful creatures, that only dwelt upon earth for a little while, and then passed away, leaving sad memories behind them. Whenever she looked upon young children, she thought of the joyous band, who had, in days long gone, made merry round her own hearth. They would have been old people now, past middle age, had they lived, but the dead do not grow old. “ My little Lucy was just like her,” or “ My sweet Mark was about his age when he left me,” were words often spoken by the good lady, as she beheld girls and boys playing near her, who reminded her of children lying for thirty years and upwards, in their graves. Very sweet and very true are the lines of the poet—

“ We have some little ones still ours,
They have kept the baby smile we know
Which we kissed one day, and hid with flow'rs
On their dead white faces, long ago.”

In many ways Mrs. Meiklam had proved herself the orphan's friend. How many men and women, now advancing in years, heads of comfortable households, could tell their children at Yaxley and in its neighbourhood, that the worthy lady at the Rest had set them up in life—saved them from a vagrant's life perhaps—by her bounty and her kindness? Many there were indeed, and some farther away than Yaxley—away in distant climes—hard-featured men, with weather-beaten faces, who, if they chose, could say—"She taught me the prayers that I think of now in the hour of sickness or danger. The remembrance of her comes into my mind when I see a comrade lying on the battle-field, or flung into a grave in the dark, wild sea."

Thank God, we have many such women in our land, whose works will live long after them, whose influence will be felt from generation to generation, when their own names are clean forgotten—blotted from the page of the world's record, but standing in golden letters in the Book

of Life. Such women and such men, walking meekly in their several spheres, are as living illustrations of the New Testament, carrying conviction and faith to the hearts of the ignorant and the sceptical, whom words without actions seldom can impress. Dillon and Bessie had been especial favourites since infancy with Mrs. Meiklam ; they were often invited to her house, and were indeed in the possession of a general and sincere invitation for any spare day or evening ; the heartiness of the reception they met with proving that they were really welcome ; and who are so keen-witted in this respect as children, who can so easily discover who loves their company and who is weary of it ? There is no doubt that the happiness of children much depends upon fruit, and Mrs. Meiklam always had the rosiest apples, preserved in some mysterious way, so as to taste and look quite fresh from the tree up to the most wonderful periods ; and then there were such peaches, such plums, such nectarines, in the great fruit gardens, where little people could

well lose themselves among bushes and trees; Mrs. Meiklam was one of the old-fashioned people, who rather objected to pruning and lopping off branches, and she would plant rose trees and pretty shrubs in any vacant spaces round walks, greatly to the dismay of younger friends, who were inclined to follow the newer system of giving fruit and vegetables all the air possible, and banishing everything ornamental from the gardens devoted to use. Ah! the new system may be the right one—nay, we know it *is* the better one—but we have a hankering after the old bushy gardens of our infancy—our good grandmothers' gardens, where fruit, and vegetables, and flowers, all grew together, and leafy evergreen hedges were permitted to rise mysteriously high—where the robin and the thrush built cosy nests, and the gooseberry bushes branched out wildly—yet bearing such quantities of fruit as one does not see much surpassed in trim, new-fashioned gardens. Don't scold us, reader, though we honestly confess we like the look of

unpruned trees, and tall, heavily laden rose bushes, and jagged sweet-briar hedges. We know it is a naughty, reprehensible taste, from the fact that we would rather they belonged to some one else than to ourselves. But, ah! for a good rush through a leafy, untidy, overgrown, dear old garden, with the perfume of a hundred sweet shrubs and bloomy flowers filling the air, and rose leaves dropping about, and the bees humming murmurously. But we must not forget our young friends.

“How funny everything looks in the snow,” said Bessie, as she and Dillon arrived at the gate of Meiklam’s Rest. “The poor old eagles up there on the pillars are quite buried. Don’t you like the snow, Dillon? It makes one feel how comfortable it is to have a warm room, and screens, and heavy curtains.”

“But some people haven’t any fires or curtains.”

“Oh, no, the peasants haven’t; but I mean ladies and gentlemen. Oh, look at that old

Jenny Black gathering sticks and breaking the trees, and there's Luke Bagley running towards her!"

Luke Bagley was Mrs. Meiklam's steward—a terrible enemy of faggot-seekers on the demesne. Jenny Black was a wretched-looking creature, half-clad, half-crazed.

"Come now, tramp off, and leave those sticks behind you!" shouted the caretaker, hurrying towards the delinquent.

"Let me keep them, sir," said the woman, shaking back her long, tangled hair; "the day's cold, and the night 'ill be worse. I haven't a spark o' fire to boil kettle or pot."

"Lay them down!" shouted Bagley, now catching her arm, and shaking it.

"Oh, mercy, mercy! You haven't the heart of a stone—it's iron it is!" screamed the wretched creature, still clutching her bundle of sticks with both hands.

"Let her alone, Luke," said young Crosbie,

coming up to the rescue—"let her have her faggots ; Mrs. Meiklam wouldn't mind."

" You old thief!" continued Bagley, not heeding the boy, " I'll have you sent to the gaol, that I will! Come, now, we'll see if you'll not let the sticks go," and he was about to strike her withered hands with his walking-cane.

" Luke, you mustn't," said Dillon, colouring with indignation, " I'll not allow it."

" What is it to you, sir?" demanded Bagley, impertinently. " Young folks haven't no sort o' right to be putting in their tongue about what they don't know nothing of."

" God bless you, young gentleman—God bless you, Master Crosbie!" exclaimed the woman, curtseying. " You're a true-born gentleman, you are!"

Luke Bagley raised his cane once more to strike Jenny's hands, when Dillon snatched it out of his grasp, and broke it in two, so unexpectedly, that Bagley was bewildered ; but soon

again furious, he would have struck the lad had he dared.

"Oh, come away, Dillon," said Bessie, in terror, "let Jenny and Luke fight it out themselves; they are always fighting this way."

"What's that you say, young miss?" asked Jenny, fiercely. "Is that all you care to see an old woman tyrannized over by an ill-conditioned servant?"

"You should not trespass on the grounds," said the young lady, haughtily; for, though not unkind, she could be occasionally thoughtless and overbearing. "Luke Bagley is only doing his duty. Mrs. Meiklam wishes her trees preserved. Come away, Dillon."

But Dillon would not stir; and, awed by his sturdy defence of the old woman, Luke felt inclined to give up the contention. The boy gave her a sixpence, and she was departing with her sticks, when suddenly a crazed light illuminated her face, wrath distorting every feature, as she stopped and confronted Bessie.

"Ay, you're a haughty piece, Miss Pilmer. It's a fine bringing up you've got! A curse upon such pride! I curse you here this winter day! I pray that you may feel more grief and hardship than ever I have felt in all my life of woe and sorrow! I pray that your heart may feel many a smart that 'ill blight it! Whether you are rich or poor may you wither under this curse! —at home or abroad, may you live to be sorry that you ever were born!"

Transfixed by surprise and fear, Bessie dared not stir. She clung to Dillon's arm, pale and horrified, while the wretched creature poured forth more wrathful sentences.

"Ay, I'll live, maybe, to see you humbled, young miss; and the time 'ill come when you'll recollect the words of Jenny Black in the woods of Meiklam's Rest!"

She turned away at last. Luke had already disappeared from the scene; and now the gray shade of evening was stealing over the landscape.

The short winter day neared its close. Dillon

and Bessie gained the avenue quickly, and hurried their pace in silence. Blackbirds were hopping gravely here and there, searching for what they could not find ; now and then the shrill cry of the bittern, or the falling of a rotten branch, weighed down by snow, broke the general stillness. Bessie's heart was beating fast, and the hand that still rested on Dillon's arm trembled nervously.

CHAPTER VII.

MRS. MEIKLAM.

THE avenue was about half a mile in length ; and when the young people reached the house, Bessie's spirits had regained somewhat of their usual buoyancy ; she was able to skip lightly up the great stone steps, while Dillon pulled the bell. It was a quaint, old-fashioned mansion, large and intricate, with wide staircases and lobbies, but rather small rooms. Let us look well at Mrs. Meiklam, as she comes down herself to open the hall-door for her young friends ; for she has seen their approach from an upper window. She is

now about seventy-three years old, of a figure that had once been perfect, and which still retains much to command admiration, in its noble carriage and erect com portment; her hair, though still thick and of fine texture, is of the whitest shade of white, and banded smoothly on a placid forehead; her dress, of quaker-like simplicity, is scrupulously neat—the muslin of cuffs and collars rivaling the outward snow in purity and whiteness. An expression of much sweetness beams in her eye, indicating that she lives in peace and with good will towards all men. She laughs when she admits the new comers.

“ My dear children, how could you walk on such a day?”

“ Oh, very well,” replied Bessie, flinging her arms round her. “ We had a delightful trip. Very pleasant indeed,” she added, lowering her voice, as the recollection of the encounter with the dreadful Jenny Black crossed her mind.

The children followed their hostess to the room used principally as chief sitting-room at the Rest.

It was a comfortable apartment, furnished in red, with a large fire burning in the ample grate, and many portraits adorning the walls. Bessie en-sconced herself at once in a large, old-fashioned arm-chair, and having forgotten to take off her over-shoes in the hall, now coolly requested Dillon to pull them off, and leave them outside the door. He did so instantly ; while Mrs. Meiklam watched the proceeding somewhat in surprise.

“ Do you always ask Dillon to attend you in this way ?” she asked, with the slightest possible contraction of eye.

“ Oh, he always does what I want ; and then, I do things now and then for him.”

“ Then neither is in debt to the other ?”

“ I don’t know that. I think Dillon does more for me than I do for him ; but that is only because I ask and want more than he does. If he asked me to do anything I am sure I would not refuse. Would I, Dillon ?”

“ I don’t think you would ; you never do,” said Dillon.

As the evening shadows deepened, and the fire blazed brighter, Mrs. Meiklam's old gray cat came walking in, followed by an aged spaniel, both intimate acquaintances of the young people, and each sat down composedly on the hearth rug.

"And now, Dillon," said Mrs. Meiklam, "I want to hear about your tutor, Mr. Stutzer. Doctor Ryder told me this morning he had been very ill last night."

"Yes, very ill," replied Dillon, a flash of interest coming into his eye.

"Poor man! how I pity him, and his poor little girl, who always looks so pale, and thin, and grave in church on Sundays. Don't you think her a sweet-looking child, Bessie?"

"Well, I really cannot say that I ever remarked her," replied Bessie, truthfully; "but I have often seen Mr. Stutzer himself—a queer-looking little man that always looks as if he was going to cry about something.

"And if he does look so—you may feel sure

he has enough to cry about," said Mrs. Meiklam, but not sharply—rather sadly and gravely.

"I think he is very poor," said Dillon.

"He must be so, if what Doctor Ryder told me is true," returned Mrs. Meiklam. "You were at his house, I believe, when he became ill last night."

"Yes—it was I who ran for Doctor Ryder to attend him."

"I should very much like to assist him," continued Mrs. Meiklam, "but I scarcely know how to do so; he does not ask for aid, and it would be a delicate thing to offer him money. Doctor Ryder wished me to head a subscription list for him, and I certainly would do it with pleasure, if I thought such a thing would be agreeable to him."

Dillon did not think such a proceeding would be at all agreeable to his poor tutor.

"It wouldn't be well to offend him," he suggested, in his truthful way.

" In one way I could assist him, by taking his little girl and keeping her here while he is ill; I am sure that would gratify him, without letting him think he was under an obligation of a weighty kind."

" But if he is starving," remarked Bessie, " I think he ought to be glad of assistance from you."

" You don't know, my dear, what ideas people have upon that point," returned Mrs. Meiklam; " there are many who would rather die than receive charity. It is a mistaken pride—but not the less hard to give up. However, I shall certainly offer to take Mr. Stutzer's little daughter, as I feel assured he would like her to be taken care of—in his present weak state. You can tell him so to-morrow, Dillon."

" I shall tell him to-night," said the boy, eagerly.

" To-night! Surely you don't intend seeing him this evening.

" Oh, yes; I said I would—and I'll come back here for Bessie."

"No—do not return ; I shall send Bingham home with her."

"Oh, he must come back, Mrs. Meiklam," interrupted Bessie ; "I had rather walk with Dillon—even if Bingham came too."

"But it will give Dillon a great deal of useless trouble."

"Oh, it isn't any trouble," said Dillon, "I'd rather come back than not."

So the point was settled.

The dinners at Meiklam's Rest were always most dainty meals—not as grand as the dinners at Mr. Pilmer's house—but far more suited to the tastes of children. The chicken fricassee so delicately flavoured—the little apple-pie so exquisite—and the pancakes and custards so delicious ! Bessie always liked dining with her old friend.

When they were all again in the red-room after dinner—the old-fashioned lamp was lighted—and Mrs. Meiklam drew out her work—not fancy-work—but some very coarse aprons which she was making for the poor.

"I would like to be always here," said Bessie, leaning back in her chair and looking very lovely.

"Not *always*," corrected Mrs. Meiklam; "you would not like to leave papa and mamma."

"No—but all is so quiet here."

"Then you like quietness."

"Yes, very much. Just now I feel as if I could die here in peace."

"But are you not very quiet at home, too? And surely you are allowed to do nearly as you like."

"Oh, yes, I have always my own way," replied Bessie, a little proudly.

"Not quite *always*, I hope."

"Pretty nearly always," observed Dillon, smiling over at his cousin.

"It is well to be able to enjoy peace in this world," said Mrs. Meiklam, thoughtfully; "and still better if we can hope for the 'Peace that passeth understanding,' in the next."

Now, the "Peace that passeth understanding" was familiar enough, as far as the words

were concerned, to the ears of Dillon and Bessie, and they were generally pretty glad when they heard them—especially in church, from the lips of Mr. Hilbert, the Vicar of Yaxley—for they knew, then, the service and sermon were all over, and that they were about to be emancipated from confinement in the house of prayer ; but beyond that, the Peace which passeth understanding conveyed no particular meaning to their minds. Their idea of religion was very vague and misty, and as of something inexpressibly sombre and dreary. They respected religious people—and looked upon them as extraordinary creatures—but no more dreamed of being religious themselves than of being burnt at the stake as martyrs. Their notions of piety were somehow mixed up with disagreeable things—thunders, lightnings, plagues—comets likely to burn up the earth—and other mysterious awe-striking matters. Are there not some amongst us who, alas ! recollect similar feelings, with regard to religion, in youthful days ? Some

who can remember how the thick darkness of the thunder-storm, rather than the perfumed scent of flowers, or the sweet summer breeze—brought up thoughts of the Creator?

The terrible and avenging God of the Old Testament is still worshipped in terror by the multitude—while the Prince of Peace—founder of the new dispensation—is too often disregarded. The fear rather than the love of God reigns yet in the hearts of thousands. Are there not some preachers of the Gospel who seem to delight in sending away their hearers trembling in every fibre at the thoughts of God's wrath and God's judgments—dreading this awful Being so much, that they feel inclined to wish there was no God—no after life—instead of departing from the house of worship feeling a glow of gratitude and thankfulness that an all merciful Father is watching over them—protecting them—willing to pardon and bless them; and with a kindly feeling of love towards their fellow-creatures filling their hearts? Mrs. Meiklam herself was one who had been

brought up in an atmosphere of piety since early infancy ; she could scarcely comprehend what it was to be ignorant of the vital truths of Christianity—especially with respect to the children of educated parents ; and though she often lectured Dillon and Bessie on religious topics, she failed to go deep enough in her instructions.

Dillon soon left the Rest to return to Yaxley ; when he was gone, Bessie went down to amuse herself in the housekeeper's room, where Mrs. Copley, the housekeeper, was making vinegar. To her surprise this was a very simple process—merely boiling sugar and water together for a little while in a large kettle, and then pouring it to cool in a wide pan.

“ And will that really grow sour ? ” asked Bessie.

“ Indeed it will, miss ; most things get sour with age, no matter how sweet they may be when young.”

“ You mean people's tempers, Mrs. Copley,” said Bessie, who was very quick-witted.

“ Yes, miss—that’s just it. Yet there are some people that have a great deal of sweetness in their natures, and they don’t get sour—they only turn strong and fine, like wine—for you know, Miss Bessie, that if I would put plenty of honey in that water, and cork it up from the air, it wouldn’t grow sour, but become nice wine. So you see it’s only half sweet tempers, after all, that turn sour with age.”

“ Then you would have people cork their tempers up, Mrs. Copley,” said Bessie, looking merry.

“ Ay, and keep them down as best they can, and not let the air and sharp wind of the world get at them.”

“ But does not the sunshine turn vinegar sour too ?”

“ Yes ; and in like manner, the prosperity and sunshine of the world spoil the tempers of many.”

“ But I don’t think our tempers and honey and water are at all to be compared, Mrs. Copley,” said Bessie.

“ Well, I think they are, miss ; and if you want yours not to grow sour when you’re old, just make it as sweet as you can now, and keep it under your own control, corked up, as you say, as tight as possible, and it’ll be a fine, wholesome, pleasant temper like the mistress’s, when you’re an aged lady.”

“ But vinegar is very wholesome sometimes,” said Bessie, archly.

“ And if it is, it’s cheap, Miss Bessie ; you’ll get it anywhere—so you needn’t want to lay in a stock of it yourself.”

Bessie was amused—but not at all convinced that her temper was to be regarded as bearing any affinity to sugar, or honey and water, or vinegar. Mrs. Copley and she had many disputes on different subjects—disagreeing, especially with reference to cooking. It was Miss Pilmer’s particular amusement to go down to the kitchen at Meikam’s Rest, occasionally, and make tiny puddings and pies from receipts of her own invention—which very much scandalized Mrs.

Copley, who felt it an insult to her understanding to see the young lady mixing up flour, oaten meal, and arrow-root for the paste of a pie—or mashed potatoes, rice, and jam for a new-fashioned description of cakes, which Bessie insisted on making herself—with her sleeves tucked up, and wearing a large apron, borrowed from the housemaid, Peggy Wolfe, which was fastened round her neck instead of her waist, owing to its voluminous dimensions. Yet, notwithstanding their quarrels, there was no one whose approaching step could so move Mrs. Copley's grim face into a bright smile as that of the wayward young lady, who would break into the dairy for cream for the cats, and fling lumps of meat, intended for soup, to the dogs. Bingham, the butler, also had to bear, with exemplary patience, Miss Pilmer's devastations in his pantry. Sometimes the silver forks, instead of being at hand for dinner at the hour of laying the cloth, would be discovered, after much searching,

in the garden or green-houses, where they were employed to stir the earth in flower-pots; while the spoons were generally acting the part of spades and shovels. The gardener at the Rest also had his trials; when he beheld his most precious plants in the hot-houses displaced from their rightful position on the bark-bed, to make way for sundry pots of wild flowers, which Bessie considered might be brought to a high state of perfection by due attention to their culture—he merely had to re-arrange the pine-apples and aloes with an air of resignation, taking care not to damage the wild flowers or cast them out, till the young lady grew weary of seeing them either decaying, or flowering no better for all the advantages given them. Nothing but experience in such matters would ever teach Bessie anything. She had implicit faith in her own opinions and judgment, and regarded all old people's advice as an infliction of a hostile nature—only to be treated like the other numerous evils of this

lower existence. Yet nearly everybody at the Rest loved her—from the lowest servant to the very pompous steward, Luke Bagley, who liked very few people indeed.

CHAPTER VIII.

DILLON RECEIVES A PRESENT.

DILLON's walk to Yaxley was a swift one, in spite of the snow. Placidly the great moon shone upon outward things, casting ghastly beams abroad. All was still and quiet. A certain degree of solemnity stole over the boy's mind, as he went on, guided by that pale light. Here and there lights were shining in humble homes ; but the cottages of the very poor were shut up for the night. To save fire and candle, the inmates had gone early to bed. Taking a short cut to the town, young Crosbie struck

through the old woods of the Rest, and followed a path whose windings he was acquainted with. He soon reached Mr. Stutzer's cottage, and found him sitting up in his room, beside a bright fire; for the poor five pounds, so long treasured up, had, at last, been changed, and Dillon was agreeably surprised to see a small tea-pot on the little-table beside him, and cups and saucers, as if some comfortable refreshment was being prepared. Missy was there, too, looking very grave, and with eyes that seemed twice their usual size, owing to the dark shadows under them. She was holding her father's hand—clinging to it, with a sort of determination not to be parted from him on any account. Very tight was the grasp of the tiny fingers.

In answer to his young friend's inquiry as to how he felt, Mr. Stutzer did not say he was better.

Dillon saw that his hand shook very much as he poured out tea for him.

"I tried to write a letter this evening," he

said, "and curiously enough, I found it impossible to guide the pen. To-morrow, perhaps, I may be able to do so. Have you brought your books?"

"No, sir; I went up to Meiklam's Rest, and have only run down to know how you are."

"And how is Mrs. Meiklam?"

"Very well, sir. She sent you a message."

"What was it?"

"About your little girl. She would like her to stay at the Rest till you are quite well again."

What a bright flush passed over the father's pale face; but the child's countenance assumed a terrified, anxious expression.

"I am very much obliged to Mrs. Meiklam—very much, indeed—and Missy will be delighted to accept the kind invitation. Won't you be glad to go to the good lady, Lizette?"

"No," whispered the child, and the little fingers strengthened their grasp.

"Oh, Missy, why not?"

The child was silent.

“And there are dogs, and cats, and birds, and everything that’s nice there,” said Dillon, holding out inducements of a rare description ; “and big apples too.”

Lizette shook her head, as she replied—

“I don’t want them.”

“And what shall I say to the good lady ? ” asked the father.

“Tell her I won’t leave you.”

“But why won’t you leave me ? ”

“Because I’m afraid of somebody coming here.”

“But there is nobody coming that I know of. Is it a man or woman ? ”

“I don’t know. It’s somebody.”

“That is a silly answer, Missy. I shall have to think that you are a foolish little baby, if you will not tell what you mean. Who is this bogie that you are afraid is coming ? ”

“*The messenger that came for mamma,*” replied the child, slowly and solemnly.

Mr. Stutzer turned paler than before ; and even

Dillon's colour changed. A long pause ensued, during which no one spoke.

"Tell Mrs. Meiklam that I am deeply grateful to her," said the sick man, at last, "and that I am about to write to a friend about my little girl; but, in the meantime, should I become worse, I will feel much obliged if she will take charge of Lizette, till an answer arrives from my friend in the North of England."

"Very well, sir," replied Dillon. And there was another pause, broken again by Mr. Stutzer—

"You will sometimes think of your old German teacher, Dillon," he said, smiling, as he drew from his finger a ring, "when you are a man out in the world, perhaps many years hence. Here is a little token of remembrance, which I wish you to accept from me. You have been very kind to me, and I thank you deeply."

Scarcely able to refrain from tears, the boy took the ring silently, and, perhaps, awkwardly, but feeling the compliment paid him warmly.

He merely murmured a faint “Thank you, sir,” and tried the ring upon two or three different fingers, finally putting it into his waistcoat pocket.

“The world is all before you, Dillon, as it is very nearly all behind me,” continued Mr. Stutzer; “and I trust your onward course may be fortunate. Yet, whatever will befall you, of this you may be certain, that when you reach the hour that will be to you as this hour is to me, you will find yourself only looking back with satisfaction, to whatever you have done of good towards your fellow-men—of sacrifice of your own selfish or vicious pleasures—of work carried out in the fear of a just Providence. What is it to me now that I studied hard, and gained honors for learning? What have all my dreams of ambition—for I *have* had dreams—turned to? Do I not rather thank God in this hour, for every kind word that I may have spoken to the poverty-stricken or distressed; for every mite that I may have added to charities; for every moment spent

in soothing the dying, or giving comfort to the sick—than for all the enjoyments and amusements of my past life; all its moments of triumph and of happiness? Many, indeed, have been my shortcomings; but I have a merciful Judge—I am not afraid. Have you fixed upon any profession, Dillon?"

"No, sir; I don't know yet what my uncle may choose for me."

"It is time that you were thinking of some future course of life."

"My father was in the army, sir," said Dillon, flushing a little, "and I would like to follow his profession."

"A noble calling, too," said Mr. Stutzer, "though some people consider that it leads to vice, and wickedness, and temptation; but that is not my opinion. I believe that some of our noblest Christians have been military men."

Lizette felt much relief when she beheld Master Crosbie taking leave of her father, without insisting on bringing her with him.

"Come again to-morrow, as early as you leave school, Dillon," were Mr. Stutzer's last words, as the boy left the room.

And now Dillon was out once more in the still, white night, passing through the busy part of the town, and by the lonely churchyard, where the tomb-stones were all covered with snow, and he paused for a minute or two at the quaint gate of the burial ground, looking in, and regarding its chill aspect with solemn feelings. He was very red, and a good deal tired, when he arrived at Meiklam's Rest; and Bessie ran down stairs to meet him in the hall, expressing much pleasure that he had not neglected his promise of returning for her, as his long absence had made her fear she would have to go home with Bingham, whose escort she particularly disliked. "It was such a lonely thing," she said, "to go on walking, tramp, tramp, saying nothing; and he, carrying a lantern, looking like a machine wound up to move on in silence." And then Mrs. Copley, and the housemaid, Peggy Wolfe, came

up to see that Miss Pilmer was sufficiently muffled, and to offer sundry pieces of weather-proof garments, likely to be useful to her; all of which Bessie rejected unhesitatingly: declining also to have her shawl tied behind her back, in the undignified fashion that young ladies of ten always scorn bitterly. Mrs. Meiklam received Mr. Stutzer's message about his little girl with great good-will, and was sorry to hear he was so weak. She said she would either drive to see him next day herself, or send Bingham with a present of preserves to him. Bessie was at length equipped for her homeward walk, and the objectionable Bingham, whose lantern was quite thrown in the shade by the clearer moonlight, followed the young people at a respectful distance, allowing them to converse together, in their own low tones, of blackbirds likely to be caught now, when the snow was so severe; and of a wonderful cage which one of Mrs. Meiklam's workmen had promised to make for them, while he was meditating upon sundry glasses and tea-

cups, cracked that day by the pantry-boy, and a particular varnish likely to beautify the furniture at the Rest. Mrs. Pilmer was relieved of considerable anxiety upon finding her daughter alive and merry after such a walk on such a night. She thought Mrs. Meiklam might have sent her home in the phaeton, but forebore to utter such ideas in the hearing of Bingham, for Mrs. Meiklam was a lady not to be offended for various substantial reasons. She was much concerned to hear that the good Mistress of Meiklam's Rest had offered to receive Mr. Stutzer's "nasty, little ugly girl," under her roof; and blamed Dillon for having put the notion in her head; but when Dillon declared it was not he, but Doctor Ryder, who had spoken of his tutor's miserable condition, Mrs. Pilmer's wrath fell upon the physician, whom she termed "a great big, ridiculous, meddling man," till at length she subsided into murmurings against Mrs. Meiklam's absurd love of every little beggar-child in the neighbourhood, complaining so bitterly, that Bessie stole out of

the room and went to bed, but Dillon stayed up till his aunt had exhausted herself, scolding about everything.

More than once in her sleep, Bessie Pilmer started that night, as the wild appearance of Jenny Black came before her in dreams of fantastic kind; and again, in fancy, she heard repeated the terrible words—"I curse you here this winter day : I pray that you may feel more grief and hardship than I ever have felt, in all my life of woe and sorrow!"

Oh, dark malediction ! How often, in waking hours of the now unknown future, did your burden weigh upon the spirit of her who seemed, indeed, as one blighted by the wrath of Providence.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MESSENGER COMES.

MR. PILMER was a man who neither had, nor wanted to have, any voice in the management of his domestic affairs—indeed his voice was seldom heard about anything. He liked a good dinner and a good old bottle of wine ; and, as he was generally supplied with these things, his good-humour seldom flagged. His wife was a woman of low connections and unrefined mind ; and having married him because he was wealthy, she did not now choose to consider that he had any right to interfere in the smallest matter of his

household. Like many men who have tyrannical spouses, he thought she was the cleverest, the most sensible of women. And in many respects she *was* clever ; but her energies were chiefly directed to the one grand aim of accumulating money. She endeavoured to increase her fortune by speculating in the funds and other securities ; and she carried on a weighty correspondence with her stockbroker in London, to whom she wrote all her letters in her husband's name, merely requiring him to sign deeds of transfer and other papers, which he cared little to understand. He had implicit confidence in her judgment ; and indeed she was most successful in her speculations, which amounted to gambling, always buying and selling shares to advantage, and very rarely failing. Mr. Pilmer passed a very dreamy existence. The *Times* occupied him every day from breakfast till a short time before dinner, when, perhaps, he would take a little walk. After dinner he generally fell asleep, unless his daughter felt inclined to keep him awake

by pulling his hair and shaking him, that he might listen to various accounts of her own adventures. He took it for granted that every thing at home was going on in the most clock-like manner. He heard his wife striking out her orders in a sharp, clear voice, with the greatest regularity. She was always upholding the necessity of economy, though she was shrewd enough never to display stinginess in dinners, or in any comforts prized by her husband, and consequently he felt convinced that none of his money was spent unadvisedly. Never was an indolent man so blessed with an active, bee-like wife : he saw the industry without being wounded by the sting, though the industry and the sting went together. The honey appearing in the form of excellent dinners, well cooked, and always on the table at the exact moment of expectancy.

When Mrs. Pilmer mentioned to him that Mrs. Meiklam intended getting that indigent Mr. Stutzer's pious little girl to stay with her at the Rest, she was very much irritated by ob-

serving that he was able to eat his breakfast with the utmost composure, merely saying—

“ Well, my dear, that is really very kind of Mrs. Meiklam.”

“ Kind ! It is all a piece of folly. What good can it possibly do a child like that to be brought to a gentleman’s house, unless she is left with the housekeeper or inferiors ? But you may be certain Mrs. Meiklam won’t allow that. She will have the mean little thing in the drawing-room, and treat her as if she were a gentleman’s child.”

“ I don’t know, really. Perhaps she may.”

“ Perhaps she may ! And do you not foresee that it is likely she will spend large sums of money on her and her father, and in the end maybe get no thanks ?”

“ It is very likely.”

“ Of course it is. And it worries me out of all patience to think of that old woman’s simplicity. What she does with all her money I cannot imagine. It will be frittered away before she

dies ; and no person will be in the least benefited by it."

" No person, indeed," said Mr. Pilmer, taking up his newspaper, which he unfolded slowly.

" You agree to every thing I say, and yet look so apathetic and stupid that I cannot bear it!" said Mrs. Pilmer, provoked beyond endurance. " Every thing is left upon my shoulders—you give me no help. You do not even assist me to manage that headstrong boy, Dillon, who is running into every mischief. There was Luke Bagley here to-day, complaining of him for encouraging people to break all the trees at Meiklam's Rest, and saying how badly behaved he was yesterday."

Mr. Pilmer, no doubt, feeling the impossibility of assuming a brighter expression of face than nature had designed for him, now drew his chair round to the fire, and, with his feet on the fender commenced reading over the long array of advertisements in the *Times'* supplement.

" I am afraid Dillon will go to the bad altogether, if he is kept at Yaxley, and permitted to

run wild," said Mrs. Pilmer, looking ominously prophetic of evil. "I wonder that you would not correct him, if it was only for the sake of your sister in her grave."

"What has the lad been doing?"

"Oh, everything wrong. Running at all hours down to Mr. Stutzer's cottage, and persuading me to send him expensive presents ; and then doing mischief at Meiklam's Rest, annoying the steward, and very likely doing worse things than anybody knows of."

"I wouldn't mind what Luke Bagley says," observed Mr. Pilmer, turning to the great body of his newspaper. "He's a cross-grained fellow ; he has no right to come here with his complaints."

"Ah, that's always the way. You never think Dillon does wrong ; but I will not be made miserable thinking of the responsibility of watching over such a headstrong boy. He must just be sent off somewhere abroad, where he'll learn humility and obedience."

"Dillon's a good lad," murmured Mr. Pilmer, with the most provoking calmness, which rendered his wife's features sharper-looking than ever. The sugar-dish and tea-caddy were removed from the breakfast table with a jerk, the sideboard cupboards locked spasmodically, and the bell rung so violently that Foster, the butler, flew from the kitchen with all imaginable speed to answer it.

Bessie had breakfasted in her room that morning, having felt too much fatigued after her walk the day before to get up. Dillon had gone to school some hours ago. Being Saturday, it was a half holiday, and the boys at Mr. Benson's were released from prison rather earlier than upon ordinary days. As soon as he was free, Dillon hastened to learn how Mr. Stutzer was. He found him lying in bed, altered for the worse even since the previous night. An expression of acute mental suffering overspread his face.

"My hand is just as powerless as it was yesterday, Dillon," he said, holding up his right hand

with a hopeless look. "I have been trying to write, and cannot make a stroke with the pen."

An open writing-desk, bearing a sheet of paper lay on the little table beside the bed.

"Perhaps you had better not exert yourself for some days, sir," suggested Dillon, sorrowfully.

"My dear boy, my letter must be written to-day or never!" replied the sick man, emphatically.
"And *never*, I fear, it must be!"

"Do you think I could write it for you, sir?" asked the boy timidly, and getting rather red at the thoughts of his presumption.

"I am sure you could. That is a good idea; and I will tell you what to say."

Dillon sat down before the desk, and, pen in hand, awaited orders.

"Shall I write in your name, sir?"

"Yes; but you may say at the end of the letter that I was obliged to get a friend to write for me."

The lad tried the pen on a scrap of paper lying near, and then commenced the letter in his school-

boy hand, Mr. Stutzer dictating each word. He wrote as follows:—

“ DEAR MADAM,—After all that has occurred to render us strangers to each other, I would not permit myself to address you, were it not for my child, Lizette, who, surely, must be regarded as innocent of any fault, whatever her parents may have done to offend. Soon—very soon—she will be an orphan, bereft of father and mother, and perfectly friendless in the world, unless you take pity on her. All I ask for her is your protection. Do with her as you will—let her position under your roof be ever so humble—but I beseech of you not to leave her to the care of strangers in some public institution for the relief of the poor. She is delicate and fragile—a child of tender feeling—and I tremble lest she may fall into rough, unkind hands. I have no worldly riches to leave to my child—not a sovereign to bequeath to her. You know how darkly the misfortunes of my life enveloped me.

It has pleased Providence to afflict me heavily ; but I shall soon suffer no more. Were my little daughter in safe hands I should thankfully resign life. An estimable lady in this neighbourhood, Mrs. Meiklam, of Meiklam's Rest, has promised to take charge of Lizette, at her own house—”

Dillon having got thus far with the letter, held his pen suspended over the paper, waiting in vain for Mr. Stutzer to finish his sentence. At last he looked up in some surprise. Mr. Stutzer was lying back on his pillow, with his eyes wide open, but making no movement of lip, or hand, or foot, though the boy saw by the faint heaving of the coverlid, that his breath had not forsaken him. To seize his cap, and run off quickly to Doctor Ryder's house, was the work of a few moments, for he knew old Margaret, in the kitchen, would be a very tardy messenger indeed. Fortunately the physician was at home ; his gig stood at the door, just returned from a long drive. Any one who knew Doctor Ryder by sight would

think he was the last man in the world that a boy would think of running confidentially to, on behalf of a very poor, sick man. His features were coarse and stern-looking. Something like a frown was ever on his brow ; his hair was abundant and shaggy ; his frame terribly large and awe-inspiring. He was in the hall when Dillon entered, his hat not yet removed from his upright locks.

“ Well, how is your friend ?” he asked, looking sharply at the boy’s frightened face.

“ I don’t know how he is. I think he is in a very queer way—something like a trance.”

“ When did that happen ?”

“ Just this moment. He fell off quite suddenly, when he was speaking to me.”

“ He shouldn’t have been speaking to you. He’s too fond of talking. Come on ; we’ll see what can be done for him.”

And, with great strides, the doctor marched out of the house and up the street, looking as if about to wreak summary vengeance on somebody.

He found Mr. Stutzer as Dillon had said, in a very strange way—quite paralyzed from head to foot. Yet it was not a common stroke of paralysis : it was a total prostration of all strength. He could neither speak nor move ; and for some time no one could tell whether consciousness had not fled too. But the intelligence of the eye soon put that question beyond doubt. His gaze was now fixed upon the half-written letter on the desk—now upon the faces of Dillon and the doctor, with an intense anxiety. When his little girl appeared at the bedside, the eyes turned upon her ; and if ever eyes could be said to speak, they were surely speaking then. But no one comprehended the language. The child looked for an explanation of this extraordinary silence of her father into the countenances of those around her. Doctor Ryder was puzzled ; he went to procure some remedies in a hopeless, gloomy way. While Dillon stood spell-bound beside the bed, old Margaret came up from the kitchen to look at her master, and shook her head ominously.

Lizette's cheeks became blanched to the whitest shade of paleness ; and still the dark eyes of the tongue-tied man beamed and burned with a meaning that none could understand. Frightful anguish of those moments ! Much to say, and no speech at command ; perfectly conscious, yet powerless as one already dead ! At length the fire of the eye died out ; a calmer light shone forth, and the gaze was lifted upwards. No one thought of saying anything to him ; yet if words had been addressed to him he would have comprehended them as clearly as ever. At this time Mrs. Meiklam's phaeton stopped at the cottage door. According to her promise, she had called to make inquiries for the sick man. Dillon ran out immediately, and described his state to her, while Doctor Ryder followed, and spoke to the lady in low, grave tones.

“ I will get out and go in,” said Mrs. Meiklam, who was not unskilled in the knowledge of many diseases, having gained much experience by

attending the sick beds of the poor and the unfortunate. The physician assisted her to alight, and, leaning on his arm, she entered the humble cottage, her dignified presence, though unaccompanied by the least *soupçon* of *hauteur*, evidently producing much impression on old Margaret Spurs, who dropped continual courtesies when she addressed her, pretending to be very much more interested in her master than she really was. The very placid expression of the lady's face gave a sure proof, to the old woman's mind, that she was a "born gentlewoman." In a short time Mrs. Meiklam stood beside the dying man's bed. For some time he did not see her, but at length his eyes turned upon her face. It might have been only a fancy of Mrs. Meiklam's, but it seemed to her that a bright light shone in them, as he moved them from her, and fixed them on his child. She felt that she comprehended the meaning of the look, and stooping, took the little hand of Lizette in her own, as she said, in a low

voice, modulated so that it might not startle the invalid, though he could hear the words—

“ I will take care of your little daughter, until she is safely placed with some one else.”

The only evidence he gave of having heard the sentence, was the closing of his eyes, as though he could now rest peacefully. But bodily peace had not yet come. The last enemy had still to do his work. Mrs. Meiklam did not remain very long at the cottage. She would have taken Lizette away with her at once ; but the child clung to the bed-post without speaking, when asked if she would go home with her. So Doctor Ryder said—

“ Let her stay as long as she can,” and the lady took her departure alone.

Dillon remained till it was time to go home to dinner, leaving himself only sufficient time to run quickly all the way, as fast as he could, to his uncle’s house, and arriving there just as the soup was over. He got a scolding as usual, but was determined that he would ask permission to return

to the cottage as soon as dinner was over. Doctor Ryder went home also, for he knew his presence in the sick chamber could now avail nothing. And now the dying man and the child were alone, in that quiet room, with the first shadows of the long winter night casting themselves over bed and chair and table; and still Lizette clung to the bed with a nervous grasp. But she dared not speak or cry; her very breath came and went so softly, that no one could have heard it. For a long while she stood there as motionless as her father, while old Margaret, now and then, came in and out, each time stooping, and listening with her head bent low over the sick man's pillow, and then going silently away again. At last a candle was lit, and when the moonbeams came playing with a cold light, through the window, the old woman closed the shutters.

When Dillon asked permission to go back that evening to the cottage, his aunt declared he might go if he liked; for that the sooner he caught cold by sitting up in a nasty, damp,

unwholesome house, the better he would learn that her advice was not to be despised, and she hoped he *would* catch cold, &c., &c. Without stinting or staying on the way, the boy sped on, till he reached once more his tutor's humble home. He felt very sad, for the many evenings he had arrived at the cottage with his books under his arm, to receive instruction from the peculiarly interesting man who was now lying speechless before him, came back to his memory, and the pleasant little stories and German legends he had often been told by the lips that might never utter words again—all rushed upon his mind, bringing wave upon wave of sorrow, till there was quite a sea of grief over his heart. Lizette's eyes were alternately fixed upon his face and her father's. She knew very well that something awful was near at hand, and within her child's heart, she was trying to summon a faith that would enable her to part quietly from her father when God's messenger came for him. Was

he coming soon?—was the rustling of his wings already stealing upon the air?

Dillon softly mended the fire, and, ever and anon, snuffed the long candle-wick. It was all he could do. Lizette and he exchanged no words. The child would not go to bed when Margaret came to carry her away. She firmly stood her ground, clinging to the bed-post with all her might, but uttering no cry. “Let her stay here,” urged Dillon, coming to the rescue, as the old woman and she carried on a voiceless struggle, “there’s no use teasing her;” and Margaret went away muttering, “Oh, Lord, Lord, this night, how I’m tortured!”

The night wore on ; the last of the dreary winter nights that Paul Stutzer would ever feel pain, or grief, or hunger, or cold, in this weary world. Hour after hour passed. Silence in the chamber still. At last, just as the midnight hour was near at hand, and while Dillon was adding coals to the fire, he heard a noise, he ran to the

bed, Mr. Stutzer had started up, his hands were clasped, his eyes fixed with an unearthly look, and murmuring distinctly the words, “ Frances, I come !” he fell heavily back to speak no more on earth. The old servant was summoned ; some struggling between the spirit and the flesh ensued, and then the spirit’s victory was won. Death claimed the body : Life caught up the soul.

CHAPTER X.

LIZETTE LEAVES THE COTTAGE.

“ So old Stutzer’s dead,” was the observation of Master Tom Ryder, as he and Dillon Crosbie stood out in the playground, after school, next day. “ Pa’s going to pay for the funeral, and Mrs. Meiklam is to get up a subscription for the young one.”

“ Yes, Mr. Stutzer is dead,” said Dillon, gravely. “ I had no idea he would have gone off so soon.”

Schoolboy vanity might have prompted the lad to display the ring his tutor had given him as a

keepsake so short a time before, but he felt that the gift was sacred now, he would not profane it, by showing it out among a lot of careless, un-thinking boys, who were inclined to make merry even about death and burial.

"Some people say Stutzer was a humbug," continued Tom Ryder, who was aiming a small stone at the top of a flagstaff, "and I wouldn't doubt that he was."

"He was not," said Crosbie, positively. "I know Mr. Stutzer was a good man; I wouldn't believe anybody that he wasn't."

"Don't be too certain, old fellow," returned Ryder; "nobody here knows anything of him."

"Then they shouldn't judge of him," said Dillon, indignantly. "Mr. Stutzer often told me of his past life, and of his school in the North of England; and then, Mrs. Meiklam knows a great deal about him."

"Does she know that he once flogged a boy to death in his school?" asked Tom, looking unpleasantly jocular.

“ No; who says it ?”

“ An old fellow that carries messages for our grocer ; he knows something of the neighbourhood where Stutzer lived before he came here ; and he says he had to run away for fear he’d be taken up and hung.”

“ Don’t believe it,” said Dillon, looking puzzled, nevertheless ; “ it’s all an invention ; why didn’t the old fellow ever say so before !”

“ Because he didn’t like to turn people against him ; but, now, that he’s dead it doesn’t signify what’s said of him.”

“ Yes, it does signify,” said Dillon, colouring slightly. “ A man’s reputation is always of consequence.”

“ Pah ! not such a man as Stutzer ; who’d care for the reputation of a schoolmaster ? Do you think I’d care a jackstraw about Benson’s character if he was to die to-morrow ?”

“ I am sure you are not in earnest, Tom,” said Crosbie, gravely.

“ But I’m sure I am, though.”

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself, that's all," observed Dillon, coolly.

"Do you want to get up a fight, I say?" demanded Ryder, throwing himself at once into boxing attitude, and assuming a threatening expression of countenance.

"No, not in the least."

"Then you wouldn't fight for old Paul, greatly as you valued him?"

"No, I wouldn't box about him."

"You think yourself a tremendous fellow."

"No, I don't. Let me pass out, I'm going home."

"Fight him, Crosbie," urged three or four lads, gathering round Dillon, eagerly.

"Not to-day."

"What day then?" asked Tom.

"No day, perhaps. Here get out of the way of the gate."

"Not till you fix an hour for giving me satisfaction," said Ryder, planting his feet firmly under him.

"Won't you though," said Dillon, catching him by the shoulder, and whisking his great form out of the way with a strength that gained him the admiration of the surrounding boys. A cheer burst upon the air as Dillon walked away, while Ryder, looking very red and angry, vowed he would thrash all the fellows round if they didn't disperse instantly.

The character of Paul Stutzer was talked of at Yaxley by more than the boys at Mr. Benson's school; but no one would have cared to mention the dead man, had not Doctor Ryder gone about, at Mrs. Meiklam's request, to seek for aid among the respectable townspeople for the orphan child. Scarcely any one would contribute a farthing towards the subscription for her, the great point of difficulty with everybody being that "they didn't know anything about the poor teacher." In vain Doctor Ryder, in his rough way, said it didn't signify what he might have been, when they all knew he died of want, and that his child —who, at least, could have committed no crime

as yet—was destitute of the common necessaries of life. The people shrewdly shook their heads ; and though some of them, out of compliment to the physician and Mrs. Meiklam, gave, here and there, a half-crown, a five-shilling piece, or half-sovereign, the whole collection did not amount to ten pounds. We fear Doctor Ryder bestowed some warm and not very flattering epithets upon the Yaxley people, when he told of his ill-success to the mistress of Meiklam's Rest.

“ Never mind them,” said the lady. “ We will return their donations to them ; and I will look after the orphan myself.” But the doctor declared that he had no notion of “ gratifying the niggardly wretches ” by giving them back their money. He would put it in the poor-box, if Mrs. Meiklam would not accept it for the child.

It was difficult for Mrs. Meiklam to know how to proceed with respect to the little girl. From the letter which Dillon Crosbie had half written for Mr. Stutzer on the evening before his death,

she concluded that there was some person in existence who might come forward to claim her, if this person could be found out. But the letter was unfinished, and bore no address ; it was impossible to discover a clue to her. The lady thought of writing to her friend, the curate of Climsley, who had first mentioned Mr. Stutzer to her ; and she did write, requesting him to say if he knew of any friend of the poor teacher of languages who could be expected to take charge of his orphan daughter ; but the clergyman knew of no such individual. Mr. Stutzer had not confided to him any of his family history, beyond the fact that his wife had high connections who took no notice of her. Indeed, it was his opinion that Mr. Stutzer, being of foreign extraction, had no relatives in this country. So, Paul Stutzer was buried in the churchyard at Yaxley, and his effects were searched, and his papers read ; but all his letters had been burnt months before, and nothing remained but a few manuscripts containing historical notes and philosophical ex-

tracts, that were of no value to any mortal, conveying no information as to his past life or his prospects for his child. It was Mrs. Pilmer's belief (at least she said so) that Mr. Stutzer had been, all along, an impostor—that the letter he pretended to write to the mysterious lady unknown was all a "got up" thing, intended to excite people's pity and wonder. There was, certainly, in her opinion, no such person as that lady ; and as to his wife having had high connections, that was all a "made up story." Notwithstanding these private thoughts, expressed only at home, Mrs. Pilmer was obliged to appear very much interested in the orphan child, so completely thrown upon the charity of the wide world, when in the presence of her friend, Mrs. Meiklam ; and to her great chagrin, she listened to her scheme of taking her to the Rest, and keeping her there till something else turned up for her, as soon as her father's funeral was over.

" And I will be glad, my dear," continued Mrs. Meiklam, " if you will send Dillon for her

to the cottage, and let her stay at your house till I send the little phaeton for her in the course of the evening."

Mrs. Pilmer smiled, and rubbed her hands together, and said "Certainly, I will," though her heart was full of bitterness all the while. It was not, however, till the day was far spent that she allowed Dillon to go for the little girl, though Bessie was full of curiosity to see her. The evening shadows were falling thickly as the youth walked for the last time to the humble cottage in the suburbs of the town. The funeral was over, and now Paul Stutzer's earthly remains lay in the damp burial ground. Oh, never more would worldly cares and griefs vex his soul! So thought Dillon, as he passed through wet streets and by dim houses, faintly illuminated by the gas lamps, already lighted. It had been a raw day ; the last of the snow had melted away, and now the earth was wet and black ; everything looked dreary. He found Lizette sitting by herself, in the room where her father had died. Her

bonnet and pelisse were on ; and she knew she was to leave the cottage, for ever, that night.

" I have come to take you to my uncle's," said Dillon, as he approached her. " Do you think you will be able to walk through the wet streets?"

" Yes, I can walk very far, and I don't mind the rain."

" It isn't far, but your shoes will be covered with mud ; if you like, I'll carry you."

" No, thank you," replied the young lady, colouring slightly ; " I'll walk, if you please."

" Oh, very well," said Dillon, smiling.

" You're not vexed," she said, as she took the hand he extended to her.

" No, not in the least."

Old Margaret now came to receive the simple adieu of the child, whom she had never particularly liked ; and, hand in hand, she and Dillon left the house.

" Do you live where I am going ?" asked Lizette, as they were out upon the road.

"I do not live at Meiklam's Rest, but I am very often there."

"I wish you did," whispered the little voice, softly.

Dillon made no reply ; and they went on silently, with the drizzling rain falling upon them, their feet splashing on the pavement. When they arrived at Mr. Pilmer's villa, Bessie ran to receive them in the hall. The servant who opened the door looked curiously at the child, who felt too much bewildered by the glare of light to take note of anything round her. Bessie's pleasant voice, and the kiss she kindly imprinted on her cheek, first roused her from a sort of trance, and made a direct impression on her. Those pretty curls, those dancing eyes, those light, silvery tones, could not be withstood. Lizette surrendered her hand to her with confidence ; and now they walked up stairs that looked very wide and grand to the stranger child ; her feet were treading on carpets, bright and soft as in a dream of palaces. Lights, too, were every-

where ; such bright, dazzling lights. Bessie led her into the drawing-room, and up to her mother, who sat at her work-table. Mrs. Pilmer scarcely seemed to look at her, but, nevertheless, she saw quite well.

“ How do you do ? ” she asked in a cold, dry tone, nodding her head, and still apparently intent upon her needle-work—the square-featured Berlin-wool man, who was still unfinished. Lizette’s reply was inaudible.

“ She is very well, but very cold,” replied Dillon.

“ Let her warm herself, then,” said Mrs. Pilmer.

“ Come to the fire,” said Bessie, putting her arm round her.

What a blazing fire it was ! The grate so large and polished ! the red coals burning so brilliantly ! and what a sleepy large gentleman was sitting before it, with his eyes shut and his mouth open ! Bessie gave her father a shake, and requested him to look at Miss Stutzer.

“ Hah ! how d’ye do, Miss ?” asked Mr. Pilmer, suddenly starting up. “ Fine weather, isn’t it ?” and then he dozed off again. Lizette stood upon the wide, handsome rug, with the glow of fire-heat spreading itself over her. Bessie removed her bonnet, and stroked her hair, speaking many kind words ; but the child only replied by monosyllables, and looked vacantly at the fire.

“ Is she very stupid ?” asked Bessie of Dillon, in a whisper.

“ No, not a bit ; she used to be very merry.”

“ Well, I suppose the poor little thing is sorry now. What a queer little image she looks there, without moving or even seeming to breathe ! I am afraid she will torment Mrs. Meiklam, if she is always so odd and silent.”

All this was spoken *sotto voce* to Dillon, in another part of the room. Mrs. Pilmer glanced, over her work, ever and anon, at the still, little figure on the rug. At length the sound of wheels was heard, and the phæton from Meiklam’s Rest

stopped at the door. Bessie ran to put her bonnet on, as it had been arranged that she and Dillon were to accompany Lizette to the Rest. Dillon approached the child with her bonnet which he had brought from the sofa.

"Am I going away again from this?" she asked, when desired to put it on.

"Yes."

"Then that is not the good lady that papa said I was to go to?" she observed, looking over at Mrs. Pilmer. Dillon could not repress a smile of amusement, as he replied:

"No; you are to go to a lady a great deal older than that one."

The child drew a long breath, and tied her bonnet strings. A vision of the white-haired lady who had stood beside her father's death-bed, and clasped her own hand kindly, came before her mental eyes. Bessie soon came down, equipped for the evening drive, and all were ready to sally forth. Mrs. Pilmer now got up, and came towards Lizette with a large shawl, which she

wrapped round her, desiring her to tell Mrs. Meiklam she had put it on her to keep her warm, and then she gave her a cold kiss. The three young people all went down stairs and entered the little phaeton. The rain had cleared off and the stars were shining brightly. Dillon drove the pony very skilfully—feeling now and then an inclination to make the animal perform strange equestrian feats, but combating it, in consideration of the young stranger's fears. Lizette seemed rather enlivened by the drive, and when the vehicle stopped before the old-fashioned house of Meiklam's Rest, with its dark walls covered here and there with ivy, she looked at it with some degree of interest. Mrs. Meiklam met the young people in the hall, and all received kisses and kind words of welcome. She had dined early herself that day, and now a meal, partaking of the character of luncheon and supper, was in readiness for the new comers, in the red-room. There were preserves and red-cheeked apples, and cakes, and snowy bread-custards, and cold apple-

pie, together with fowl, ham, and tea. Right well did the orphan child comprehend that she was really welcome under that hospitable roof ; she almost felt happy in that cheerful room with the old, gray cat on the hearth-rug, and Gypsy the spaniel, beside it. She liked it better than the large room at Mrs. Pilmer's house. Bessie was all attention to her, and Dillon cracked nuts and peeled apples for her, with great good-will. When supper was over, and the table cleared, Mrs. Meiklam disappeared for a little time, and then came back with a large box, which she placed on the table, desiring Lizette to open it. The child obeyed, her hands trembling with timidity and excitement, and to her surprise found it filled with pretty chairs and tables, tiny plates and dishes, candlesticks, jugs, cups and saucers, and lastly, dolls of fairy size, to suit the fairy furniture. A smile broke over her countenance, as Mrs. Meiklam told her to place them, one by one, on the table ; and even Bessie,

who had relinquished toys on her own account, was delighted with the pretty things displayed.

"I believe these are nicer than my pictures of lions and tigers, missy," said Dillon.

"They are not the same," replied Lizette, fixing her dark eyes on his face; "but I liked the pictures too."

"Now these are all for yourself," said Mrs. Meiklam, stroking her hair; "to-morrow you will have to furnish a nice house for these ladies and gentlemen."

The child smiled again—a dreamy, melancholy smile that soon faded away. When the time came for Bessie and Dillon to go home, she felt sorry and surprised.

"Ah, if you lived here too!" she murmured, burying her face on Bessie's shoulder.

"She will be here nearly every day," said Mrs. Meiklam drawing her kindly to herself; "and you will yet have great fun together, playing about the place."

Soon after the departure of Dillon and Bessie, Lizette went to bed. The housemaid, Peggy Wolfe, a good-natured woman, was her attendant; and she was to sleep in a little bed in Mrs. Copley's room. But, although Peggy kissed her two or three times, and apostrophized her as “a sweet pet, Lord love her;” and “a little pigeon of the world,” the poor orphan could not help feeling her lonely and strange position. Reader, have you ever felt what it was in childhood to be left without father, or mother, or brother or sister, or any friend that you have ever known before? If you have, you know well there is nothing on the earth so dreary as the grief of a little heart thus bereft of old acquaintances. It was long ere Mrs. Copley retired to rest; and for hours the child lay awake in the dark room, with strange faces floating through her brain, and a bitter remembrance in her heart that the hands she had so often clasped in confidence were now passing their first night in a damp grave in the bosom of

the earth, where worms were crawling. She tried to think of the spirit above; but the flesh mourned for the flesh, and she cried herself to sleep, worn out at last.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. PILMER IS DISTURBED.

IN the course of the next day, Mrs. Pilmer and Bessie walked up to the Rest; the former carrying a present of a rare West Indian preserve for Mrs. Meiklam. They found Lizette in the room, with her protectress, arranging the doll's furniture in all possible ways, on a little table near the fire-place. Mrs. Pilmer's face was wreathed in smiles, as it usually was, up at the Rest.

"My dear Mrs. Meiklam, how are you?" she asked, bestowing a fervent kiss on her old friend. "I came on purpose to see how you were, and

how this poor little darling was ; in fact, to hear of you both."

"Thank you, my dear, we are both very well," replied Mrs. Meiklam, smiling pleasantly. "You see we have got everything to make us happy here ; toys of all kinds ; and my little Lizette tells me she likes reading as well as playing."

"That is extremely nice," observed Mrs. Pilmer, eyeing Lizette with a sinister look.

"Very nice and gratifying," said Mrs. Meiklam. "How is Dillon?"

"Pretty well ; he had a little cold this morning, and I was so uneasy about him, I begged him not to go to school to-day ; but, dear boy, he never minds what I say."

"That is wrong ; but he is very fond of learning, which should be a great comfort to you."

"He is a very good creature, considering the disadvantages he has laboured under. His parents were both silly, poor people, and one can scarcely expect anything very perfect from their son. I do what I can for him ; but there are

great faults in his character. Still, I endeavour to do my duty towards him, in every way, and I try to instil good principles into his heart; but ah! it is hard work against inherited errors."

"I think Dillon is as good a boy as ever I saw," said Mrs. Meiklam, quickly.

"Oh, good enough in his way, when the fancy seizes him. I see that, in spite of every thing."

"In spite of what, my dear?"

"In spite of his headstrong ways, and a great many other things."

"Well, as far as I can see—and I am pretty sharp, too—I should say Dillon was as good as any human being could well be, unless he is a very great deceiver."

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Meiklam, no one can tell what people are so well as those who live in the house with them," and Mrs. Pilmer gave a smile, something akin to the yellow light sometimes seen in one part of the sky when the rest is black with a coming thunderstorm.

"Depend upon it, you need not be uneasy

about Dillon ; he is naturally well-disposed. I see proofs of his good heart every day," said Mrs. Meiklam, trying to console her friend.

Mrs. Pilmer looked at the carpet for some minutes without speaking, and then produced the little jar of preserves from her basket.

"I hope you will like it, dear Mrs. Meiklam ; I just got two jars from a friend the other day, and I thought I should offer you this one. We cannot afford to buy these sort of delicacies ourselves, so that we are not accustomed to them : indeed, I like to live as simply as possible."

Bessie looked with wide open eyes at her mother, for she knew that the same little jar of preserves had been in the pantry at home for the last three months : it was one of half-a-dozen Mr. Pilmer had bought long ago, and this one had not been touched, because every one was tired of the preserve, by the time the five other jars were emptied at desserts and luncheons. But there were many times when Bessie was equally astonished at her mother's speeches.

"I am very much obliged to you, my dear," said Mrs. Meiklam, taking the jar gratefully; "but it is too bad to deprive you of so rare a thing. Like yourselves, I like to live simply too. I think it is sinful to squander money on expensive luxuries, when we have so much to do in the way of charity. Don't you think so, Bessie?"

"Well, I daresay it is, Mrs. Meiklam; but I am afraid I should be often tempted to buy something very nice, and never mind the poor."

"It is well to speak the truth, at all events," said Mrs. Meiklam, smiling.

"Bessie is always truthful," remarked Mrs. Pilmer; "but I think she mistakes her own character; she is very charitable, and often denies herself many things, to give them to those who need them more."

"No, indeed mamma; it is you who mistake my character," corrected Bessie, with eagerness; "I am very thoughtless and wicked: I hardly ever think of doing what is right."

"This is more of your fancied truthfulness and humility," said Mrs. Pilmer, fondly.

"There is nothing like truth," observed Mrs. Meiklam; "I believe Dillon also speaks what is true upon all occasions."

Mrs. Pilmer looked on the ground, a benevolent smile playing on her features.

"We must make allowances, Mrs. Meiklam; we cannot be harsh with boys, especially if their natural dispositions tend contrary to what is right."

"Do you mean to insinuate that Dillon ever tells falsehoods?" exclaimed Mrs. Meiklam, flushing slightly.

"Oh, mamma," said Bessie quickly, "Dillon *never* speaks an untruth; don't you know he never does?—you quite forget. Don't you remember Mr. Benson saying lately, that he was the most truthful, straightforward boy he ever knew! Just recollect, mamma," and Bessie laid her hand on her mother's shoulder, and looked into her face imploringly.

" You are always standing up for people whether they are right or wrong, my love," said Mrs. Pilmer, who felt very much inclined to give her daughter a good scolding.

" I love Dillon Crosbie for his poor mother's sake, as well as his own," said Mrs. Meiklam, gravely, " and I should feel very much grieved indeed if he were to grow up with dishonourable principles. I hope some day to be of use to him in his future career ; it is my determination that he shall never want, either in my lifetime or after it. So you may comprehend that my interest in him must be very strong. Of all things that are wicked, I abhor a lie. Solomon tells us, that he that speaketh lies shall not escape ; and, indeed the liar is nearly always caught in his own trap."

Mrs. Meiklam, in speaking, fixed her clear and penetrating eyes on Mrs. Pilmer, who endeavoured to conceal her discomfort by a faint smile of approval.

" How wretched I should feel," continued Mrs. Meiklam, " if I thought that the person

who was to fill my place at Meiklam's Rest—ruling over my dependants and tenants when I was mouldering in my grave—was either to be a tyrant or unprincipled ! Ah, I trust such a thing may never happen !”

Had a sword penetrated Mrs. Pilmer's heart, she could scarcely have felt a keener sense of pain than this last sentence conveyed. Her face grew pale. She could not speak for many seconds. Bessie had now joined Lizette, and was helping her to arrange the doll's furniture in a most successful and highly approved manner ; while all the time, Lizette was looking at her beautiful curls, which possessed a strong attraction for her. Mrs. Meiklam asked Bessie to stay all day at the Rest, and Mrs. Pilmer graciously assented to the proposal.

“Tell Dillon to come for me in the evening, mamma,” whispered Bessie, when her mother was going away.

Mrs. Pilmer said nothing ; but when evening came, Dillon did not make his appearance at the

Rest, and Bessie was obliged, as the night was fine, to walk home, with Bingham for her only escort. Her mother had not delivered her message to her nephew. She employed him all the evening in unraveling a great quantity of tangled cotton, which no one else would have had patience to set to rights; and when he had finished the task, she gave him the stalest bread in the house for supper. Dillon found that night very dull. He was thinking how his German lessons were all over now, and how stupid the house would be if Bessie was always away. Mrs. Pilmer had her dark thoughts too; and she lay long awake that night in her bed, forming some plans concerning the removal of her husband's nephew from Yaxley and its neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. MEIKLAM'S THOUGHTS ABOUT LIZETTE.

At the suggestion of Doctor Ryder, who was generally her right-hand man in cases of difficulty, Mrs. Meiklam inserted an advertisement in the *Times*, addressed to any connections that Mr. Paul Stutzer, lately deceased, at Yaxley, might have possessed ; but she never received an answer ; and though she daily hoped, for a long time, that some one might present him or herself to claim the orphan, no one appeared to ask for her. Weeks passed, and still Lizette remained under Mrs. Meiklam's roof, unsought for by any relative.

She was an interesting child ; and as her shyness wore off, her protectress found her companionship pleasant. Quiet and subdued, she appeared to like sitting by the fireside, listening to pretty stories, better than running about in the pleasure-grounds ; and both Mrs. Meiklam and Peggy Wolfe possessed a great store of tales, which were devoured eagerly. It must be confessed that Lizette liked Peggy's stories of giants and fairies better than her mistress's tales of good and bad boys and girls, but all were acceptable. She gradually became communicative herself, and told of the great wild moors of the north near her old home, where there were no trees nor houses, and how she and her nurse were once nearly lost in a great snow-storm on these barren tracts. So the weeks lengthened into months, and the winter at length had all passed away. Brightly arrived the spring days, bringing forth young leaves and blossoms. Bright, indeed, are the spring days to childhood. While older hearts may feel subdued with recollections of happier hours spent in

years far back, when the trees were budding, and the primroses springing up on the hills, young spirits always feel joyous at the approach of green leaves, and the tender growth of garden plants. Now it was that Meiklam's Rest became a paradise in the eyes of Bessie and Lizette. Oh ! the glories of those old leafy woods where the birds made such ceaseless music, and the squirrels hopped gaily from bough to bough ; where silvery streams wound themselves along through deep ravines, plashing over rockwork with dreamy gurgle, or tumbling in foamy turbulence down steep banks ! Dillon Crosbie did not often visit the Rest now. His aunt generally found something remarkably pressing for him to do when he was invited there ; and she would inform Mrs. Meiklam how the dear boy always liked being at home better than elsewhere, and that, troublesome as he was, she loved to have him with her. So, of course, Mrs. Meiklam did not like the idea of depriving her of her nephew's precious company, which Mrs. Pilmer declared was always

more valuable to her when Bessie was away from home than at other times; and the old lady, therefore, seldom extended her invitations to him, though Bessie was asked to her house nearly every day, as a companion for Lizette Stutzer. Dillon might have amused himself by walking out with some of his schoolfellows, but his clothes being worse than those of most other lads at Mr. Benson's, he did not like appearing in them more than was actually necessary. So he tried to fill up his long, weary hours of leisure, by studying German. Meanwhile, Bessie seemed in the greatest possible delight with Lizette. She taught her her lessons, and actually commenced teaching her music, greatly to the annoyance of her mother, who, however, dared not openly put a stop to these proceedings, as Mrs. Meiklam regarded them favourably. Bessie evidently looked upon Lizette as a sort of animated doll, of which she considered herself the mistress; while Mrs. Pilmer felt the necessity of paying the orphan child occasional marks of attention—such as

inviting her now and then to her house, and making her sundry trifling presents—very much against her will. Lizette could hardly tell why it was, but she always felt heartily delighted when any day spent with the Pilmers at Yaxley came to an end, the return to Meiklam's Rest being balmy and soothing to her. Mrs. Meiklam's views, at first, respecting Lizette, were to place her under the care of some kind person who would educate her in such a way as might enable her in future years to earn her bread as a governess; but as time wore on, and the affectionate nature of the child manifested itself, she altered these intentions. For many years she had wished to become the protectress of some orphan girl, who, in turn for her kindness, might be a comfort to her in her declining years; but she had never yet been able to meet with one so wholly destitute as to be given up entirely to her care. Here, then, at last, was a little girl, apparently without kindred, and possessing many endearing qualities, thrown completely upon her hands, never likely

to be claimed by any one else. Might not this child yet prove a treasure to her, if she lived many years longer, overpowered by age and infirmity ? Yes ; perhaps Providence had so ordered it, and she would not part with her. The idea was a romantic one ; but Mrs. Meiklam had always been a little romantic, and unlike many other individuals, she had plenty of money to carry out her benevolent schemes. Doctor Ryder, who was a shrewed man, told her to beware of doing anything hastily, and pointed out to her the great responsibility of adopting a stranger child, who, while still a young girl, might be thrown upon the world at her death.

“ Never mind that, my dear Doctor,” was Mrs. Meiklam’s reply ; “ depend upon it, I will do my duty towards her. She shall never have to regret that she was brought up as a lady at Meiklam’s Rest.”

And most surely the old lady never meant her words to prove false. But vain are often the intentions of the human heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BIRTH-DAY FÊTE.

BESSIE arrived one day at Meiklam's Rest, in a state of great excitement, to say that her sister Mary had arrived at Yaxley, accompanied by her godmother, Mrs. Devenish.

"Then we shall have her at our fête on your birthday," said Mrs. Meiklam—who always gave a juvenile party on the anniversary of Bessie's advent into this world.

"Oh, yes," replied Bessie, joyously ; "and Lizette must get a new frock and learn to dance."

The birthday fête was to be held in a few days,

and great preparations were going on at the Rest. A new bower was erected in an advantageous spot of the grounds, and as it was already the middle of May there were plenty of flowers to make wreaths and deck ornamental arches.

Bingham, and Luke Bagley, and half a dozen inferior men at the Rest, were employed in these arrangements, and Mrs. Meiklam was continually giving directions about them, with as much gravity as if the expected company consisted of grown-up ladies and gentlemen. Little Lizette was in a great flutter of expectancy, especially as Bessie informed her that she, being a resident at Meiklam's Rest, would have to do the honours of the fête, and pour out the tea for the guests—a most tremendous undertaking, which so perplexed the child that Bessie had to make her rehearse the proceedings several times before the great evening arrived. Now, it so happened that Mrs. Devenish had also brought a new guest with her to Mrs. Pilmer's house, and this no less a personage than a nephew of her late husband—a young

gentleman already verging upon manhood—and the heir of considerable wealth. He was the only son of a baronet, residing in the north of England; and Mrs. Pilmer was highly pleased to have such a visitor under her roof, not that he was a very attractive young gentleman—rather the reverse—being of a cynical disposition and conceited manners; but then he was a baronet's son and would one day be a baronet himself, so that he was honoured accordingly. Had Dillon Crosbie been a more foolish boy than he happened to be, this youth might have rendered him very unhappy, by putting various ideas in his head likely to embitter his mind; but Dillon was too sensible to be led by him. On the evening of the *fête* at Meiklam's Rest, this young gentleman accompanied the party from the Pilmers' house, intending to take part in the merry making. The company at the Rest consisted of Tom Ryder and his three sisters, two Miss Hilberts, daughters of the Yaxley Vicar, the two Miss Pilmers, Dillon Crosbie, and the strange youth, who had not before

made his appearance at Mrs. Meiklam's house. He had yet to be introduced to her. Lizette had thrown off her black frock for this festive occasion and was prettily dressed by Peggy Wolfe in one of white crêpe, tastefully ornamented with jet trimming, while a white wreath encircled her fair head. Very gracefully she received her guests, according to Bessie's instructions and the rehearsals of the previous days. Bessie herself was the most beautiful girl at the *fête*, though her sister might have rivalled her, had she possessed a pleasanter expression of face. Mary Pilmer was a haughty, over-bearing child, very handsome as to regularity of feature, but so "eaten up with pride," as the Miss Ryders declared, "that there was no bearing her." She was very much overdressed, and wore a profusion of expensive ornaments that quite outshone even Bessie's attire, though that was by no means plain.

"Let me introduce to you our friend, Mr. James Bend," said Bessie, presenting her father's guest

to Mrs. Meiklam, with all the airs and graces of a grown-up woman of the world.

Lizette looked steadily at the youth, as she heard his name mentioned, but beyond this, her face expressed no particular meaning. The name was familiar to her, that was all. Bessie then introduced him to herself with great ceremony, calling her "Miss Stutzer." A faint red hue stole over young Bend's face as he heard the name, and he soon after observed to Dillon Crosbie that it was a peculiar one. "Was the child a foreigner?"

"No; her father was, though."

"Who was he—a German?"

"Yes; he used to teach the language at Yaxley, but he's dead now. His name was Paul Stutzer."

No one noticed that the colour all faded away from the youth's face, as Dillon spoke to him. It was long before he recovered himself. When the dancing began young Bend chose Bessie Pil-

mer at once as his partner, though that young lady confidently whispered to Dillon that she "hated him," and would far rather dance with himself. Mary Pilmer requested Master Crosbie to be her partner, as she would not honor young Ryder with her hand upon any account, of which Tom was very glad, as he cordially returned her dislike of himself; he infinitely preferred to dance with the gentle little lady presiding over the festivities. The Miss Ryders and Miss Hilberts danced together, and the scene was one of great spirit, on the fresh green sward, with all the servants looking on, in a high state of admiration at the company. Then there were games of an animated description, which rather disgusted Mary Pilmer, who had a strong antipathy to all that was undignified, and when the romps commenced, she took Dillon's arm, requesting him to conduct her to the house.

"You must not go!" shouted the three Miss Ryders, who were great hoydens, though good-natured girls; "we'll not allow it!"

“Pray come,” urged Mary, still leaning on her cousin, who did not like to annoy the Miss Ryders.

“You wish to spoil our sport,” said the hoydenish young ladies, now growing angry ; “but we won’t put up with any nasty, conceited, spoiled pet, coming to carry her airs on here ! We won’t submit to be despised !”

There was quite an uproar, and Mary only looked more scornful than ever, declaring in bitter terms that she felt herself very much insulted by having been invited to meet such company, with the “charity child, Lizette Stutzer,” permitted to meet her on terms of equality, and three wild Indian girls clamouring so noisily !

“Oh, Mary,” said Bessie, colouring with shame ; “it is you who are insulting every one here.”

Mary now ran for protection to James Bend, who was rather diverted by the unpromising termination of the festivities ; while the Miss Ryders set up shouts sufficient to deafen any ears.

They flung great handsfull of yellow sand and clay over Mary's new dress, and could not be restrained from giving vent to their fury in various ways. Of course the youths could not be expected to attack the girls, even in defence of one of their own sex, and the Miss Ryders, being great strong creatures, succeeded in terrifying Mary so much, that she was obliged to fly in a most undignified manner to the house, and seek redress from Mrs. Meiklam, who, to tell the truth, could not refrain from laughing heartily, though she was a good deal annoyed at such unmannerly behaviour. Poor Bessie was ready to weep with mortification that her sister should have displayed such rudeness ; and, to her infinite disgust, James Bend declared the whole thing was great fun. In his opinion, Mary had treated "*the canaille*" assembled there quite properly. The idea of having the daughter of a dead schoolmaster mingling in their company was too cool—upon his honour, it was. After which assertion, Bessie felt she disliked him more than ever, which she candidly informed

him of; but he only laughed, saying, she looked so pretty in a pet, that he did not mind vexing her. Never had a birthday fête ended so gloomily. No one stayed for the fine supper which Mrs. Copley had been for days preparing. The Miss Ryders declared they would all go home and tell their papa and mamma everything that had happened, and expressed an unalterable determination of never again speaking to that horrid, tyrannical Mary Pilmer ; and as to James Bend, they hoped no one at Yaxley would ever see his face again ; he was a disgusting and odious object, and we are not sure that they did not wish something very bad, indeed, to happen to him—for the young ladies were not very guarded in their speech. Poor Lizette Stutzer, bewildered and terrified at the proceedings, clung to Dillon Crosbie for protection, conscious enough that words derogatory to herself had been spoken in her hearing ; her face was very pale, her eyes shining darkly.

The May evening was still light and warm,

when the Miss Pilmers, accompanied by Dillon Crosbie and James Bend, walked home to Yaxley, taking the route through the woods. Each of the young people was pre-occupied—Mary being still in a bitter ill-humour, full of indignation and angry thoughts; while Bessie and Dillon were sorry that their anticipated fun had turned out so unprosperously. James Bend had his own dark thoughts, that none knew of but himself. Now and then he addressed a few words to Bessie, beside whom he always choose to walk. As the party were going forward, and while still in a shady part of the grounds, far from the house, they suddenly encountered a figure, whose apparition always now made Bessie Pilmer tremble. It was that of Jenny Black, looking as wild as ever.

“Good luck to your birthday, Miss Pilmer!” she exclaimed dropping an ironical courtesy. “A pleasant one it was; and many such pleasant days may you spend, my nice little lady! and you’ve got a nice young gentleman with you, too—rich and grand—fit company for you, but maybe

you would'nt like him for a husband for all that; he'll never be like Master Crosbie, if he was a lord."

"Get out of the way, woman," said young Bend, haughtily.

"Isn't the path free?" demanded the crazed creature, wrathfully. "Haven't I a right to cross it as well as the best o'ye, though I *am* only a poor despised simple; but not so simple as you think, maybe, either! You young tyrant! you've the mark of Cain on your forehead—I see it plain; you've a look in your eye that I'd know anywhere!"

The words no doubt sprung from the woman's diseased fancy — without meaning. Yet, who knows? Does it not sometimes seem as if the gift of a mysterious divination was bestowed upon these outcasts of their species, who so often utter wild prophecies of the future with unerring accuracy? However it may be, James Bend grew darkly pale; his eyes shot fire; he could have felled the wretched creature to the earth.

"Who is that horrid woman?" demanded Mary, aloud.

"Horrid woman; oh, very horrid, indeed! Thank, you, young lady; you're both nice girls, Miss Pilmers! Maybe you'd like your fortunes told?"

"No, thank you, Jenny; we are going home," said Dillon, soothingly.

"Oh, Master Crosbie, you are not the gentleman that would insult and trample upon the poor; you wouldn't look at the worms in the earth the way those other three haughty youngsters look at a mortal of flesh and blood! And what will the difference between them and old Jenny Black be when we're all together under the sod? Ay, young stranger; you have the mark of Cain on your forehead. See that there isn't oceans of wickedness on your conscience before you get to your grave; you have a bad drop in you; your heart's wicked enough for any guilt!"

Young Bend uttered an oath, and springing forward, whirled Jenny violently from the narrow

pathway, pushing her among the low brushwood that grew around.

“ Well done !” she exclaimed, clapping her hands. “ You are afraid of me, young sir—brave young sir ! But take care of your temper ; maybe it ’ill bring you to the gallows yet !”

“ Really, Jenny should be taken up and put in confinement,” said Bessie, who was ready to weep from various mingled emotions. “ Do send her away, Dillon ; she is actually following us !”

Dillon had to exert all his soothing influence to induce the wretched woman to allow them to pursue their homeward walk in peace. This unhappy *rencontre* had put the finishing stroke to the miseries of the day. Flinging herself into her mother’s arms, Bessie cried most bitterly on arriving at home, insomuch that Mrs. Pilmer declared she would have Jenny Black taken up by the police ; at which threat her husband laughed in the most provoking manner.

“ It is a pity that we can’t have her burnt, as in old times,” he said. “ A couple of hundred

years ago the enlightened magistrates of the county would soon have rid us of such a woman."

"This is a very uncivilized part of England, I think," lisped young Bend; "it seems quite like the backwoods."

"And all the people savages?" exclaimed Mary Pilmer emphatically.

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME ARRANGEMENTS CONCERNING DILLON CROSBIE.

“WHAT relation are you to Mrs. Meiklam, Arthur?” demanded Mrs. Pilmer one morning, as her husband was reading the *Times*.

“Eh? what relation? Second—no, third cousin, or something that way,” was the reply.

“You’re the nearest relation she has; that’s one thing.”

“Yes, I believe so—now that my father and Agnes are dead.”

“Well, if she died without a will, you, being next of kin, would get all her property.”

"Would I? But she won't die without a will; I know she means to leave Dillon a good deal."

"Pah! not a bit of it! Old people are always saying what is false."

"I hope not; I would like her to leave Dillon what she could."

Mrs. Pilmer drummed her hands on the table, and for some minutes was silent.

"I think Dillon is too old now for Mr. Benson's school," she said, at last; "I have been thinking of sending him to a better one."

"Have you?—Yes, I think he might go to Eton."

"Eton! Fiddlesticks!—no; who would pay his expenses there?"

"I would."

"*You!* Really, I believe you think you are made of money. Who would dream of Eton for a charity boy, as you may call him, like your nephew? I daresay you would have him travel on the Continent with a private tutor, like young Bend!"

"I wouldn't have him like young Bend in *anything*," said Mr. Pilmer, emphatically.

"He shan't go to Eton, at all events," said his wife.

"Well, there are some good schools near London ; I will see about them."

"That won't do either ; I wish him to go to Germany, where there are such excellent schools."

"Germany, Mary!" exclaimed the husband, opening his eyes. "Why would you drive the lad there?"

"For his own good. I plainly see there is every likelihood of his getting into mischief in this country."

"And does nobody ever get into mischief in Germany, my dear?"

"I wish you would be rational. I have made up my mind on this point ; I know of a school where he will be taught everything necessary, and boarded and lodged, for the third of what we would pay for him in England."

"Mary, that boy is my sister's son—the child

of my beloved Agnes," said Mr. Pilmer, feeling, at the same time, rather sleepy, and dropping his newspaper on the hearthrug, "and I feel that I should keep him under my own mouth—no, my own eye. I wouldn't for anything allow him to be treated shabbily, or—what was I going to say next?" But as Mrs. Pilmer didn't choose to prompt him, he fell off into a doze; and his wife set about thinking in good earnest of the German school for Dillon Crosbie, informing Mrs. Meiklam, and her other friends at Yaxley, that Mr. Pilmer had settled upon sending his nephew, very much to her grief and concern, to study on the Continent; but she was resigned to part with him, when it was for his own good, &c., &c.

Mrs. Meiklam did not understand much about the education of boys; it sounded well to speak of sending a youth to the Continent, and she hoped all would go well with Dillon, who, boy-like, was pleased at the idea of a change from Yaxley. Not so Bessie; she looked upon his approaching departure with the utmost despon-

dency — for he was not to return to England at vacation time ; that was one of the chief advantages of such an academy, in such a far off land, in Mrs. Pilmer's opinion. In times of parting, the friends who are left behind, generally feel, perhaps, more deeply the pain of separation, than those who are setting forth on a bustling journey, with all the excitement of strange scenes before them. Very sad, indeed, was poor Bessie's heart, as she witnessed the preparations for travelling, and his outfit getting ready. Perhaps it was the first time she had ever felt a really heavy weight upon her heart.

“ Dillon, are you not very, very sorry to leave Yaxley ?” she asked one evening, as the dread time drew near at hand.

“ No, scarcely at all.”

“ Do you mean to say you do not care about leaving everybody here ?” she returned, looking rather surprised and offended.

“ I am sorry to be obliged to part with many friends, Bessie ; but, still, I had rather go than stay.

"Oh, cruel cousin!" exclaimed Bessie, "to speak so unfeelingly of quitting us all!"

"Perhaps no one may miss me. In a week I shall be forgotten here."

"You know you do not say what you think," said Bessie, whose eyes were now filled with tears of mortification, "or else you cannot understand or care about me. Oh, Dillon! I may have been sometimes unkind to you—I may have said hard or rude things in haste, when angry—but I am very much grieved for having ever offended you, if such is the case. I never meant to be unkind."

"You have never offended me, Bessie—never been unkind," replied the youth, gravely; "and I should be most ungrateful if I ever recollect anything of you but what was affectionate and thoughtful; but I know how insignificant I am—of no consequence to any one in the world. When we meet next, you will only remember me as the boy you used to play with—the—"

"There, stop now!" cried Bessie, putting her hand on his mouth; "you will say something I

shall never forgive. Dillon, believe me, I will never, never in my whole life, forget you. Whatever may happen, or wherever I may be, I shall never like anyone half so well—except papa and mamma," she added, after a pause. Poor child! she was only speaking the truth, as it then appeared to her.

"Thank you, Bessie," he replied, in a somewhat sad tone for a young gentleman who had surely received a very warm declaration of attachment—unasked too.

Bessie burst into tears, and was weeping violently when her mother unexpectedly ran in to ask Dillon where on earth all his pocket handkerchiefs were, and why he didn't take more care of his clothes ; so he was obliged to run up stairs, and commence searching for the missing handkerchiefs in drawers and in sundry pockets resting in trunks already half-packed ; while Mrs. Pilmer spoke sharply to Bessie, demanding what she was crying about—knowing very well all the time—and desiring her to get her bonnet and go

to Meiklam's Rest. Gladly enough the poor child did as she was bade, for she could cry as much as she pleased while going alone through the woods. She quite forgot her usual dread of meeting Jenny Black. It was a lovely evening, very golden and fragrant, with sunshine rich upon field and meadow, and the scent of new hay on the breeze. The tinkle of sheep bells sounded in the distance. The lowing of oxen from the rich pastures, the shout and laughter of merry workers in the hay-fields, were borne on the light breath of the summer wind. Blackbirds whistled in prolonged notes; smaller birds were twittering shrilly. All was unheeded by the sorry little weeper passing slowly onward, by open glades, and through dusky thickets, where the last year's leaves lay, still yellow and damp, on the shaded earth. She had arrived at a tiny rivulet that wandered musically below the steep banks of brushwood and tangled gorse bushes which grew thickly in many spots of the woods of Meiklam's Rest, when a laugh, that made her shudder,

struck upon her ear, followed by a voice singing, in a wild, discordant tone, the following verse, which was repeated twice over—

“ Oh, where is my blithe, bonnie lover a-going,
A-going so far from me !
While the birds are singing, and the flowers a-growing,
Still away, away goes he !”

As she expected, Jenny Black soon stood before her. It was necessary to be very brave ; and Bessie summoned all her courage, and, we must confess it, all her graciousness—for this was no time to be haughty or grand. Inwardly, Bessie despised herself, for her cowardice ; but how could she dare to brave the terrible wild woman ?

“ Don’t be afraid, Miss Pilmer,” said Jenny, noticing the pale face of the young lady ; “ I am as harmless as an infant. I never injured mortal yet, though many a person has injured me. Why are you crying, poor child ? Is the world going hard with you already ?”

“ Very hard, Jenny. Master Crosbie is going way,” said Bessie trembling.

"I know he is, my darling of the world; but mind you, wherever he goes, he'll have luck. Look you, I knew his mother here at Yaxley, and she was just like yourself, Miss Bessie. I remember her wedding day, and the grand carriages, and white ribbons on the horses' heads; but she turned her face away when I asked her for money that day, and so she hadn't luck. She looked scornful at poor, cracked Jenny, though I was young then, and not as ugly as I'm now." This was said in a low, confiding tone, and the woman even went so far as to take the young lady's hand as she continued—

"Come now, and I'll tell your fortune, without asking a halfpenny for it."

"Oh, no, thank you, Jenny; I won't indeed," cried Bessie, in terror.

"Come child, show me your hand, and we'll just step down to the river there, and sprinkle water on it. It won't take ten minutes."

"Don't ask me, Jenny. I am in a hurry to

go to Mrs. Meiklam's, and Miss Stutzer expects me to tea."

"Miss Stutzer's a pretty pet, gentle as a dove. She wouldn't frown if you would disappoint her for hours. Don't be afraid. I'll only tell you what is true ;" and Jenny led the trembling girl to the bank of the river and cautiously down till they both touched the very stream. She hastily threw some mystic drops on Bessie's right hand, which she then examined minutely, frowning much as she noticed the little palm crossed and recrossed by indistinct and innumerable lines.

"Sorrow, sorrow everywhere here," she muttered, "and grandeur and riches too ; and here's a hearse. Oh, Miss Pilmer, you'll be very unlucky ! " she exclaimed at last, in a tone of concern.

"And why did you curse me, Jenny, that day in winter ? " demanded Bessie, trying to feel unconcerned and careless, while her little superstitious heart was quivering nervously.

"I am sorry I did it, child!" said the woman, shaking her head, and adding, with a wild light in her eye, "*Shall I tell you truly what I know will happen to you?*"

"No, not now, at least," said Bessie, preparing to run up the bank.

"God pity you, poor thing," murmured the weird woman, not choosing to follow her. "I *did* curse you, and I'm sorry for it now!"

Glad to escape, Bessie now ran on, as fast as ever she could, towards the house, and never stopped to take breath till she was safe in Mrs. Meiklam's arms, with the soft voice of Lizette Stutzer whispering soothing words of comfort in her ear.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAST NIGHT AND THE LAST MORNING.

TIME sped on. The last day of Dillon Crosbie's stay at Yaxley arrived, and he was permitted to spend it with Bessie at Meiklam's Rest. The hours of the long summer day passed away, and then came the dreamy, fragrant night, with the large moon hanging in the heavens, so bright and clear that the light was equal to that of many a noon-tide. Out upon the lawn, and through the shrubberies, Dillon, Bessie, and Lizette Stutzer wandered. Spicy plants were shedding odour abroad; leaves of varied tints and shapes were

glittering with dew; the warmth of the air was almost tropical. Now and then the young people stopped to listen to the song of the nightingale, whose notes sounded distinctly on the still air. Occasionally, some insect of the night hummed loudly as it flitted by; while from the distant meadows was heard the hoarse cry of the rail.

"Dillon, you will often think of this night when you are far away," said Bessie.

"Yes, when I am eating *saur kraut*, and listening to some song of German vaterland," replied Dillon, with the most provoking and unromantic coolness.

"You will see the beautiful rivers and vineyards that papa used to speak of," said Lizette, timidly.

"Oh yes, and the forests, and castled crags crowned by old fortresses," added Dillon, with enthusiasm.

"And I shall be all the time at Yaxley, looking out on old scenes, Master Crosbie," said Bessie.

"If we could all go to Germany, it would be pleasant," observed Dillon; "just we three."

"And Mrs. Meiklam," added Lizette.

"And papa and mamma," suggested Bessie.

"And about fifty other friends besides," said Dillon; "on the whole, I think I had better go, after all, by myself. Don't you agree with me, Bessie?"

"Yes, since you think so yourself; I think you seem rather to like leaving your friends in England."

"What good would it do if I seemed very sorry, Bessie? If my friends think it well to get rid of me; I must only bear up heroically," said the lad.

"Ah, Dillon you know no one wanted to get rid of you," said Bessie, reproachfully.

Dillon made no answer. The young people went into the garden, and all round the grounds, wandering through silent groves, and most probably awakening some birds from their evening slumbers. The coming separation seemed very

momentous, though none of them dreamed of the many things that would happen to each, before they should all three meet again together in that spot. Mysterious veil that hides the future from our view—mysterious, but, oh, very merciful ! Would not those three young people have started and turned cold with a chill feeling, had they known under what circumstances they would next gather together at Meiklam's Rest ?

As it was, Dillon Crosbie looked with sadness in his heart at the moonlit scenes that he might not behold again for many days and nights, gathered into weeks, months, years.

The voice of Mrs. Meiklam was soon heard calling them in.

" You are keeping my little Lizette out too long in the night air," she said, as they all approached the house, their shoes wet with the heavy summer dew. " It is just ten o'clock."

" Then it is time to go home, Dillon," said Bessie ; " we will set forth on our last walk to Yaxley."

Bessie did not know how prophetic that sentence was—"Good night, Mrs. Meiklam."

"Good night, my dear. Good-bye, my dear Dillon. God bless you very richly in everything that is good for you!"

Dillon's hand was warmly grasped by that of the kind lady, and a kiss of maternal fondness was pressed upon his lips. You are right, Dillon, to hold that hand long within your own, and to linger on the door steps, listening to that gentle voice speaking. Ah, look back at the stately form yet watching your retreating figure, for never more will you behold it till eternity has opened on you both!

Lizette had whispered her adieu very gently and tenderly, and stood beside her protectress, looking after Bessie and Dillon, till they had disappeared among the trees. The walk to Yaxley was a very silent one; Bessie's hand rested on her cousin's arm, perhaps more heavily than usual. Bingham followed the young people at a respectful distance. Miss Pilmer thought it all very

sad. She sat up late that night, helping to do the last of the packing for to-morrow's journey. Any sister who remembers what she felt when called upon to part for the first time with a dearly beloved brother, can sympathize with her feelings now; she slept none all that night, and when the golden beams of the early radiant morning came flooding her room with rich glory she arose to witness the departure. Everyone in the house was up early that morning, butler, pantry-boy, housemaid, cook, kitchenmaids, all. None would miss bidding Master Crosbie good-bye. Mr. Pilmer had made an extraordinary and heroic effort in getting out of bed several hours sooner than usual, and now felt very like a fish out of water; Mrs. Pilmer, though brisk as possible, and smiling, had an uncomfortable sleepy look about the eyes. Dillon was flushed and excited. Bessie pale, weary, and subdued.

The breakfast prepared for the departing one was unusually tempting; not the cold bread and milk of old, but toast, eggs, ham, and preserves,

which were nearly all left untasted ; for even the boy's appetite can sometimes flag on the eve of an important journey.

Hark ! upon the morning air, sounds the warning blast of the coachman's horn. Now the heavy rumble of wheels is heard, approaching noisily from the town. The idea that there is not a moment to spare seizes everyone. What haste ! what flurry ! Never before was Mrs. Pilmer so obliging—so anxious to assist her nephew, and expedite his movements. The coach draws up before the house ; the sun-light shines upon the large red wheels, and upon the yellow letters that denote the name of the vehicle to be “The Yaxley Swift Hawk.” The horses are fresh, the driver smiling, for he has had his dram a few moments ago. Trunks and boxes of various sizes, shapes and conditions, and passengers very drowsy and discontented looking, load the roof of the coach ; they are wondering what the stoppage now is for, and they don't like it ; they look upon each other as enemies, and hate the thoughts

of more intruders coming to swell the number of those already on the roof—not so the coachman : he would pile passenger upon passenger if he could, and run the risk of being overturned any day, for so many shillings a-head. Dillon's portmanteau is hoisted up quickly ; there is scarcely time to say good-bye. Mr. Pilmer grows quite energetic, and takes a couple of sovereigns from his pocket, thrusting them into the boy's hand, with a speedy “ Good-bye, my boy, and take care of yourself.” Mrs. Pilmer, who has already counted out to him money for his travelling expenses, and a little, very little, for pocket money on arriving at the foreign school, gives him a sharp kiss and says, “ There now, don't wait a moment !” Bessie receives the most tender adieu of any one. It is hardest to part with her, and Dillon has to bite his lip, and frown, and gulp all feeling down, when he turns from her and runs down stairs, where the servants one and all join in a hearty—“ God bless you, sir ! and

may we soon have you back among us!" Soon!—oh, vain hope!

The lad finds many school fellows assembled outside, waiting to see the last of him; ay, and Tom Ryder is there too, ready to wish him God speed, for though they had quarrelled often, they were still friends. There are other Yaxley acquaintances looking on too—poor men who have liked him and known him since he came to the neighbourhood, a little child in a tunic frock; and there is Jenny Black, smiling and courtesying, and blessing him with dark hands raised upwards. Dillon has only time to lift his cap and smile and bid a general adieu to all.

"Now, young gentleman, be quick, sir, please!" shouts the coachman. "We're five minutes late already." And so Crosbie springs up lightly; he seats himself—the horses move—the long whip glides over their backs, and the coach speeds on its way. Standing in the drawing-room window, Bessie sees all this; she receives a last look—a

last smile from the frank countenance, now mingling with hard and rugged faces hemming it in on the coach-roof. Gone, really gone ! oh, loneliness and sorrow for the one left behind ! But the morning air is fresh, and the movement of the coach, lumbering and heavily laden as it is, gradually exhilarates the young traveller ; he has passed the churchyard, and the town, and the cottages in the suburbs ; he has passed Mr. Benson's large house, in an upper window of which he descried the worthy schoolmaster looking out, in somewhat of *deshabille*, and nodding to him over the blind ; he has left all the old well-known scenes behind, and now he is driving by strange road-side cottages and country hedges, by farm-houses and hamlets, by pretty villas, and lordly homes of the wealthy ; over bridges, up hills, and on lonely roads, where houses are few— all is new to him, and all is fresh and bright. Once or twice a shadow crosses his heart, as the feeling strikes him that he is of very little importance to any one in the round wide world. A friend

of his uncle's is to meet him in London, and accompany him for the greater part of the journey towards his final destination, and so we say, as many before us have said—God speed you, brave-hearted boy! May you make as many friends for yourself, away in the land of the foreigner, as you have made in Yaxley and its neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XVI.

LIZETTE AND BESSIE.

NOBODY need imagine that Mrs. Meiklam or her doings escaped censure and comment among her acquaintances; not even Mrs. Copley or Bingham regarded her as infallible, though they were inclined to think well of her. The stay of poor Paul Stutzer's orphan child under her roof roused some dissensions at Yaxley. People, whom it could not possibly concern in the smallest degree, declared it puzzled them excessively, to find out what Lizette's final destiny was to be. Would her protectress keep her at the Rest till she was

grown up? Would she turn her out when she grew weary of her? Would she throw her upon the world suddenly and unexpectedly? Would she spoil and pamper her, and leave her, in the end, every shilling she possessed? Nobody could tell: one thing was clear—whatever was to be done with the little girl, Mrs. Meiklam would meet with disapproval from *some* quarter. The fact of the old lady having always been regarded as a sensible person, only aggravated her present offence towards mankind in general. As time wore on, however, these gossipings and censures died out. People grew, at last, reconciled to seeing little Miss Stutzer sitting in the well appointed pew of Meiklam's Rest, in the Yaxley church, every Sunday, dressed in garments befitting a young gentlewoman; they ceased to murmur because she drove out in a covered or an open carriage nearly every day; Lizette's own sweet manners, perhaps, being influential in overcoming the general prejudice against her. There was one person at Yaxley, however, who never

could think of her, save with a feeling of enmity. That person was Mrs. Pilmer. Mrs. Meiklam was a truly pious woman ; and under her guardianship, her protégée grew daily in grace. Lizette had been gifted with God-fearing parents, and first impressions are rarely altogether effaced : even though in after years the storms of temptation or passion may sweep furiously by, characters traced on the tender heart of infancy are seldom completely washed away. Shadowy they may grow, but they are yet there, requiring only a touch to bring them out vividly again. Lizette's humility of heart was remarkable. The spirit of Christian meekness shone in the chastened light of her eyes ; there was a rare purity in the expression of her whole face. Perhaps the delicacy of her constitution may have had some influence in chastening her spirits, which were never high, like those of other children ; always quiet and patient, she liked the repose to be found at the Rest better than any noisy games or sport. Nothing pleased her more than bringing the gifts to

the poor of the neighbourhood, which Mrs. Meiklam employed her to distribute. Gradually the peasantry round Meiklam's Rest learned to love and bless the little messenger sent to them by their always kind benefactress ; and when Lizette was old enough, Mr. Hilbert, the clergyman, engaged her as a teacher of a Sunday-school class. Naturally timid as she was, she endeavoured to conquer a few scruples before agreeing to accept this proposal, but finally she triumphed. Mrs. Pilmer thought it rather a proof of forwardness that the little girl should go about so much among the neighbours, and make herself conspicuous as a Sunday-school teacher. She little knew how great was the struggle in Lizette's heart, between her sense of duty and her retiring nature. Very much more agreeable would it have been to her own selfish feelings to sit still, and, hiding her light under a bushel, edify no one else thereby, than to go about making herself useful as she did. Thus, while quietly acting an heroic part—conquering natural inclinations, and

arming herself with a borrowed courage—the young girl was pronounced by her inimical judge to be bold, presuming, and set above herself. There were other acts of self-denial and self-correction practised by our young friend—one of her greatest efforts and triumphs, being the overthrow of certain prejudices against certain people. When Mrs. Pilmer came to the Rest, as she very often did, her instinct made her always wish to run away and hide upstairs till she was gone ; conquering this feeling of aversion, she was at length enabled to meet her with politeness and kindness ; and when invited to spend days at her house, she went willingly, because she knew Mrs. Meiklair would be annoyed if she refused to go, though in her secret heart she was yearning to decline the invitation, and stay at home. How often are such strifes going on in the minds of quiet-looking people, which no one dreams of—how many sacrifices made, that are never understood or acknowledged ? Few of us, in our walk of life pass onwards without being wronged ; but, then,

neither do we pass on without wronging others. Mutual misunderstanding has been the stumbling-block of many friendships—the cause of much wrecked happiness. With the quick eye of a child, Lizette saw that Mrs. Pilmer did not like her, and for this reason she strove hard not to return the ill-feeling. The Ryders were very intimate at the Rest; but they were rather too noisy to be agreeable companions for Miss Stutzer; they bewildered her; though she would have enjoyed a game of romps very well, if not afraid of being trampled upon, or hurried to an untimely end, by being thrown over the banisters to an unfathomable abyss below. Bessie Pilmer was still her firm friend, and, being older than herself, assisted her much in her studies. A visiting governess, however, was engaged to attend her at the Rest every day; and though not near so clever or quick as Bessie, who was gifted with rare talents, Lizette yet made great progress in all accomplishments. Mrs. Devenish did not, now, visit Yaxley every year; her visits became

few and far beween and Mary Pilmer grew more and more a stranger to her family, as time wore on. It seemed to be her godmother's aim to wean her as much as possible from her parents and sister. Left very much to her own devices, Bessie Pilmer read as she pleased, and thought as she pleased. Many and many a wild fancy crossed her brain. Lizette Stutzer often listened with open mouth and eyes, to the strange ideas expressed by her friend, respecting life and its belongings. In vain Lizette tried to instil some of her own happy views into Bessie's heart ; the latter listened incredulously, or carelessly to all her gentle arguments. Although generally merry, and full of sparkling vivacity, Bessie, while still little more than a child, had yet her moments of utter despondency, which none knew of but herself. Wayward, petted, spoiled, as she was, there existed nothing more apparently to wish for than she possessed ; but most certainly peace did not reign in her heart at all times. She possessed one of those spirits that, owing to

the past and present state of society, have rendered, and still continue to render, their possessors, if women, most unhappy. The energy that could expend itself on nothing within the prescribed limits of the feminine sphere, wasted and burned away, desolating rather than fortifying. All women have not the same tastes, the same interests, the same ways of thinking, more than have all men. Why, then, does custom still, in an age of civilization, continue to bind them down to one routine of action?

“My dear child,” said Mrs. Meiklam one day when Bessie asked her this question in other words, “God is working out his great plan of the world’s regeneration surely, though, it may seem, slowly. Not in my time—not in your time—but in ages to come, things will be changed from their present state. In the mean time, we must only humbly wait, and watch and pray, for the better and clearer understanding of human intellects. Women have their sufferings and their wrongs, but men are not without theirs also;

the very mistake of woman's social position affects men in their marriages and in their children. They will one day discover, that their own happiness is concerned, as well as that of women, in the total change which sooner or later will come over existing customs and laws. Yet do not murmur, my dear Bessie, at your position. I am an old woman now, and full well I know how much of temptation, and Satan's snares I have escaped, by not having been born a man."

"But you are rich, Mrs. Meiklam; and I am comparatively rich, too," said Bessie. "We may have little to complain of; yet how many other women there are in the world who must feel their inability to rise from poverty and obscurity to anything better. Ah, Mrs. Meiklam, the world is all wrong!"

"Wrong enough, my dear. The shadow of sin is dark upon it still. Men and women suffer alike, and through each other. Never think that you, or anyone, can separate the interests of the two sexes. What is for the good of one is for

the good of the other. Do you think that the sister can suffer, and the brother not feel the influence of it? or, that the father can remain untouched by the fortune or misfortune of the daughter? When the position of women is improved, so will the well-being of men increase. Mothers who have attained their proper dignity as responsible and rational beings, will be more likely to have children more noble than the present race of men and women. All will come in the good time of God's pleasure, Bessie; we must wait patiently."

"Ah, Mrs. Meiklam, you know of old I never had any patience!" exclaimed the wayward girl, flinging her arms round her old friend's neck. "If I were a queen, I would alter all the laws on the spot, and I wouldn't have one-half of the creation any longer miserable!"

"And would you be very hard on men?" asked the old lady, smiling archly.

"No; I hope I should not be unjust; though I think they would deserve some punishment for

all their past wickedness. How could they be so cruel as to make such laws as they have made!?

“My dear, they think it is we women who are the cruel sex,” observed Mrs. Meiklam, pushing back the clustering ringlets from Bessie’s most beautiful forehead. “You may have it in your power to do much mischief yet; but use the power mercifully, child. Remember that men have hearts that can be broken, though it is a fashion to think that all feeling belongs to women. Never be a coquette, Bessie, whatever your inclination may lead you to do.”

“What is a coquette?” asked Lizette, leaning her head on Mrs. Meiklam’s shoulder.

“A thoughtless or wicked woman, who for amusement or cruel design, tries to gain a man’s love, and then disappoints him by letting him know she never cared about him. I cannot at present give any better explanation of it, my dear.”

“I think I shall never be a coquette, Mrs. Meiklam,” said Bessie, pressing her small hand on her blooming cheek.

"I hope not, most truly, my dearest girl," said the old lady, gravely.

Many such conversations occurred between Mrs. Meiklam and her bright-witted young friend from Yaxley. Intellectual herself in a remarkable degree, she was one of those people who, however aged, can feel pleasure in the society of the young, and whose powers of thought keep pace with the advance of the times. Indeed, in some respects her ideas went beyond the times.

Bessie still enjoyed as much as ever, her day spent at Meiklam's Rest, where Lizette's life glided on so peacefully. Happy days of childhood, that can never return, precious are ye even in remembrance! Whatever may be your cares, your griefs, your anxieties, they bear but a shadowy resemblance to the deeper tinted sorrows of later years. They are only like the first faint fall of twilight, while after griefs resemble the thick gloom of a starless night! Blessed are they who can wait patiently through the hours of the dark night for the coming of the eternal day.

CHAPTER XVII.

A REMOVAL DETERMINED UPON.

MRS. PILMER went on weaving, unconsciously, her dark web. Fortune seemed to smile upon her. Her speculations increased, and so far prospered. Her wealth was accumulating every day. Suddenly her husband, rousing himself from his habitual lethargy, declared that he must leave Yaxley and go to London. He was sick of Yaxley. Without precisely knowing what ailed him, Mr. Pilmer had never felt comfortable in his mind since his nephew went away. He missed him almost daily, and yet he seldom

wrote to him. He left the charge of the correspondence between England and Germany to his wife. Mrs. Pilmer did not like the idea of leaving the neighbourhood of Meiklam's Rest. She knew how people were apt to forget the absent. But her husband could be obstinate when he liked. She foresaw that there would be no peace for her unless she consented to pack up and leave Yaxley. Going to London had its advantages too. Bessie could have good masters there to complete her education ; she would see more of life than in a country neighbourhood.

One day while Lizette Stutzer was sitting outside the house on a rustic chair, engaged with a piece of needlework, she observed Bessie walking up the avenue very quickly, looking rather flushed and excited. After the first greeting was over, Bessie sat down beside her, and, at the conclusion of a little pause, said—

“ My dear Lizette, it is all settled that I must leave you. We have decided on going to London.”

“ Oh, Bessie!” exclaimed Lizette, growing pale, as a pang of sorrow shot through her heart.

“ Yes, indeed. Our house is taken, and the furniture already in it, and now there need be no delay. We shall be within a short distance of town—a delightful distance. The only circumstance I regret connected with the arrangement is that of being obliged to part with you and Mrs. Meiklam. I like the idea of going to London very much, it will be such a variety after Yaxley.”

“ I shall be very lonely, Bessie.”

“ I know that, and it makes me feel wretched ; but we may meet sooner than we think.”

“ But not as now, Bessie,” said Lizette, mournfully, “ not as we have done in all the years that have passed.”

“ Perhaps not, but our friendship and love for each other must always continue. You know Lizette, we cannot always remain as we are now. We must grow up. Already I am past fifteen. I begin to think myself dreadfully old ; and then,

Yaxley is so dull ! I must say partings are very sad affairs."

" Ah, they are heart-breaking !" exclaimed Lizette, with more than usual energy. " But what are earthly partings to separations that must be for eternity !"

" My grave little pet, what sad views you take of things !" said Bessie, smiling.

" Dear Bessie," said Lizette, after a pause, during which she had been trying to summon up courage, " I would feel very happy if I thought you were among those who will inherit the life to come—if I could feel certain we should yet meet to part no more for ages that can never end."

" I trust we shall meet before that," returned Bessie, laughing lightly. " I would not entertain such gloomy thoughts as you for anything !"

" I cannot help feeling sad at times, when I think of all the souls that may not be saved. Only for knowing that the mercy and power of God are infinite, I should never feel happy !"

" The best way, in my opinion, is not to think

about it at all," said Bessie. "There is no use in torturing one's brain about what cannot be understood. Things must take their own course in spite of everything we may do."

"Ah, Bessie, it is in our power to do good. We must not let things take their own course. If everyone sat still, not troubling themselves about what did not just concern their own affairs, what a dreadful, selfish world it would be!"

"There are few people who do not like to meddle with the affairs of others," said Bessie, smiling; "and yet, according to mamma, the world is most frightfully selfish. Now, do not look so sad, my sweet dove. You were made for angel works, but not myself. I am of the earth, earthy. I shall run my course as others do. I shall be young, middle-aged, old, and grey-headed. Merry in my youth, cross and grumbling in age, and so on till death closes the scene. I shall pass away, and the world will go on all the same—people coming and going, as the leaves

grow and fade, till our little globe is blotted out from the universe.”

“ Bessie, do not say such things.”

“ I say what, perhaps, others think, though they dare not speak the truth. If I want faith, it is my misfortune; but I will never pretend what I do not feel. Remember me, nevertheless, in your prayers, Lizette : and now I must go and tell Mrs. Meiklam that we have fixed the day for our departure.”

The good lady at the Rest regretted to lose her friends, especially Bessie ; but the companionship of Lizette Stutzer prevented her contemplating the separation with so much pain as she might otherwise have done. Her protégée returned with ardour her affection and kindness. In every way it seemed likely that the hopes she had early formed of having her for a tender friend in days of age and infirmity would be realized.

“ My dear Mrs. Meiklam,” said Mrs. Pilmer, when she came to the Rest to inform her friend,

in person, of the day appointed for her journey from Yaxley, "you know we should never have thought of going to London, were it not for the sake of dear Bessie, for whom I am inclined to sacrifice my own wishes completely. It will be a great expense to us to live near London, where everything is so enormously dear; but we must sacrifice much for our children. Parents cannot be so selfish as to overlook what is for the interests of sons and daughters."

"And yet how often do we find parents neglecting what is most essential to their children's welfare—while they are lavishing money on worldly matters, forgetting the spiritual."

"Very true, my dear friend, and I am often sad in thinking of it; yet I humbly trust it is not my own case. I endeavour to set Bessie as good an example as possible; for I say to myself, 'Ah, if the mother walks in a crooked path, must not the child follow?'"

"And yet, not always," observed Mrs. Meiklam, fixing her eyes on Mrs. Pilmer's face. "You

will see some children quite different from their parents. I do not think Bessie is one bit like you—not an atom."

"When I was young, I was more like her," said the lady, colouring slightly. "I had very much that colour of hair and complexion."

"I don't mean in appearance," replied Mrs. Meiklam quietly. There was a pause

"Impress upon Bessie, Mrs. Pilmer," continued Mrs. Meiklam, with some solemnity, "that wealth, pomp, or vanity, can never bring her lasting, scarcely even *ephemeral* happiness."

"That is precisely what I tell her every day ; and I am convinced she does not care for one of these things in the least. Indeed, I sometimes think she is too little like other girls of her age—far too steady and thoughtful."

"I was sorry she would not accept Mr. Hilbert's offer of teaching in the Sunday-school," said the mistress of the Rest.

"Oh, she is very bashful, dear girl. I know she would have taken a class in a moment only

for her extreme timidity. Very few young people have nerve or courage for teaching."

" My little Lizette is very timid, and yet she likes to make herself useful in that way."

" She is a paragon of goodness," observed Mrs. Pilmer, with a secret sneer."

" She is, indeed, a dear child, and a great comfort to me. No granddaughter could be more attentive ; she seems to find out my wishes by intuition. Every day I feel more and more thankful for possessing such a treasure. I am sure you will be glad to think that I have such a pleasant little companion for my lonely hours when you and Bessie are away."

" Oh, truly delighted : it will be such an ease to my mind ! I will be so anxious to hear frequently of you. Dear Lizette might write very often to us. Do not let us be without getting letters three times a week. In fact I should like to hear every day."

" My dear, we shall have little to tell you of; our quiet life will not afford much to write about

—but since you are so anxious, I will make Lizette write occasionally to you.”

“I shall be miserable if you do not. If a week goes by without a letter coming, I will be so uneasy—fancying all sorts of things.”

“Letter-writing, my dear Mrs. Pilmer, must be looked upon as a waste of time, when there is nothing particular to say. I cannot promise that Lizette will write oftener than once a week, at the utmost, unless I am ill; but now that we are speaking of letters—will you tell me why it is that Dillon never writes to me? I have never heard but once from him since he went, so long ago, to Germany.”

“Boys do so hate writing letters!” exclaimed Mrs. Pilmer. “I have to scold him very much for neglecting his correspondence. Sometimes I cannot sleep at night, he is so long answering my letters.”

“But surely his schoolmaster would inform you if anything was wrong with him.”

“Oh, yes, I know that, and I suppose he knows

it too ; and so he goes on amusing himself without thinking about old friends at home. How delighted he was to get away from Yaxley ! But how could we expect feeling from a boy like that, or gratitude, or anything of that sort ? I never do, and so I am never disappointed. If he chooses to forget his kind friends at Yaxley, it may be his own loss, that's all." And Mrs. Pilmer sighed, while Mrs. Meiklam looked thoughtfully out of the window on the far-spreading landscape of wood and park stretched away below.

That evening when Mrs. Pilmer went home, she added a postscript to a letter intended for Dillon Crosbie, writing thus—

" Poor Mrs. Meiklam seems to me to grow different from what she was ; she never asks about you, or appears to care if you are dead or alive, which surprises me ; but old people become capricious and hardened from day to day. I think she wishes to wean herself from her relatives, and resents their interference in the smallest matter.

She fancies everyone that pays her attention is only wanting to get her money—so I am just as glad we are leaving her neighbourhood—it is so mean to be suspected of legacy-hunting.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

TOM RYDER'S EARLY COURTSHIP.

THUS the Pilmers left Yaxley. The parting between Lizette Stutzer and her dearly loved friend was very affectionate ; but there was a buoyancy in the air of the former, and a bright light in her eye shining even through tears, which betokened an inward happiness that could scarcely be clouded by the separation from her interesting little friend. Sad indeed was the blank in poor Lizette's heart when her companion was gone from her. It is true that the Miss Ryders were still very often at Meiklam's Rest ; but they were too different from

Bessie, too boisterous and unrefined, to compensate for her loss ; yet Lizette liked them too, and they certainly seemed to like her. Their brother Tom rather frightened her with his rough behaviour ; and the more she appeared terrified, the more pleasure he found in exciting her fears, by running himself into imminent dangers, at all hazards, such as leaping over the widest streams, raising the ire of terrific bulls who would chase him fiercely through the fields, roaring terribly ; or climbing up the highest trees, and then seeming as if he had hardly anything to cling to, to keep him from tumbling to the ground, and being dashed to pieces ; while his sisters looked on at his antics with great unconcern, merely expressing an occasional hope that he might yet get a good fall. Lizette's cheeks often turned pale at Tom's hardihood, and indeed for this reason, perhaps, he liked to rouse her fears, she looked so interesting when alarmed. At length, the young gentleman began to send valentines to the fair little girl at Meiklam's Rest—effusions of admiration written

in round, school-boy hand, and bearing strong evidence that the writer was no poetical genius ; they were all signed with the initials T. R., in a most glaring and palpable manner ; and of all the teasing practised against her, Lizette disliked this most, though Tom was quite in earnest, for he had come to the conclusion that little Miss Stutzer was the dearest, prettiest creature in the world. She was so unlike his sisters, and, above all, so unlike himself, so fragile and delicate, that she possessed a powerful attraction for him. Therefore, he must needs write love letters to her, and walk with her, and waylay her as she is going to visit the sick and poor ; and, in short, commence a system of attention that Lizette looks upon as persecution ; but she is so quiet and gentle, he is not deterred by her openly expressed wishes that he would let her walk alone—“ Now, Tom, I wish you would go away—I do, indeed,” were words often repeated ; but the soft eye was not scornful enough to let them have the least effect, and Tom’s reply would generally be something like

this—" Oh, I can't leave you till I get to old Nancy's ; you know there may be a fierce dog on the way, or a horrid ruffianly-looking beggar, like the one that frightened you so much the other day, so I feel it my duty to protect you on this lonely road ;" and then Lizette would declare that she did not want any protection, and that she wished, indeed, he would just go away ; but it was all of no avail. Tom would walk and talk as long as he liked, and that was very long indeed.

" Ah, Master Ryder," said Jenny Black one day, as he was going from Meiklam's Rest, " you needn't think Miss Stutzer will ever give her heart to you. She isn't fit for you, nor you for her. She isn't made of the same clay as other people ; yet you are a good gentleman, too—I wish you well ; but don't think of that young lady : don't."

" Why not, Jenny ?" asked Tom, laughing, but not as over-pleased as if old Jenny had prophesied that Miss Stutzer would surely love him and marry him one of these days, though he had no more faith in her seership than he had in ghosts

or other supernatural things ; yet who is there that will not rather hear pleasant than unpleasant nonsense ?

“ Give up thinking of her—give it up,” muttered Jenny, gathering brambles from the brushwood, and not heeding the explanation he had demanded ; “ it will be worse for you both, if you don’t.”

“ You wicked old wretch !” thought Ryder, feeling inclined to pitch something at her, as he jumped over a stile and disappeared. What was Lizette Stutzer, that she should think of rejecting him, the son of Doctor Ryder, the rich physician of Yaxley ?

The letters from Bessie Pilmer to Meiklam’s Rest were at first very frequent ; Lizette got one nearly every day for the first month of her absence ; then, during the next month, one came every week ; in the third month, they appeared once a fortnight ; and in the fourth month of separation, there came only one altogether. At the end of a year Mrs. Pilmer herself wrote all the letters from Markham House to Meiklam’s

Rest, and very endearing epistles they were, all addressed to Mrs. Meiklam, and all full of honied sentences. Bessie paid no visits to Meiklam's Rest ; once or twice she was invited there very pressingly, but she really could not accept the "kind invitation," she was so busy, &c. ; till at last she was asked no more. Mr. Pilmer, however, was despatched frequently to the Rest to keep its mistress in remembrance of him and his family, and from him Lizette learned a few interesting facts concerning Bessie, such as that "she was now a great big woman, taller than her mother," or, "oh, very well and blooming," or "just as merry as ever," which did not impart much information respecting the way she spent her time, who her friends were, or what she was learning. Lizette's hours were always occupied, except when she mused alone in the garden, or while sitting out in distant, quiet meadows ; and even then, if she seemed idle, her mind, at least, was busy. The Rest was a very retired home, yet the young girl was surrounded

by elegance and refinement. Her flowers, her books, all carefully selected, her needlework, her visits to the poor, filled up nearly every little space of time; and then she occasionally drove out with Mrs. Meiklam. Her natural delicacy of thought and feeling had much effect upon her manners, which were graceful and courteous. Although dressed generally with much simplicity, she was permitted to wear elegant attire, pure and neat, and fashioned with taste—for Mrs. Meiklam did not entertain lugubrious views on the subject of dress; she disapproved, of course, of vanity, but she liked to see her young favourite prettily attired, without appearing over-dressed, or eccentric from wearing stiff, unhappy-looking garments, such as some serious-minded individuals seem to think necessarily consistent with piety. Only for Tom Ryder's unwelcome attentions, Lizette would have nothing to disturb her mind; his sisters spoke much in his favour, declaring him to be most kind-hearted, though he had that "rough, boisterous way," and she might

have tolerated him as a friend, if he did not wish her to regard him as a lover. Had she been older, she might have known better how to bear or put a stop to a courtship that was not agreeable to her ; but—young, shy, and too gentle to speak unkindly to anyone, even an enemy—she found it quite impossible to repel the youth's advances. Tom, on the other hand, was by no means overburthened with modesty, and he was most persevering in whatever he undertook : so that Lizette had to feel very unhappy and embarrassed about this foolish love of his, which she was ashamed to say anything about to Mrs. Meiklam, though she showed her all the valentines she had got since she was twelve years old. But Mrs. Meiklam could not fancy who “T. R.” was ; and Lizette's voice was not very audible when she ventured to say the initials might mean Tom Ryder ; and even if they did mean Tom Ryder, the old lady could only fancy it was a piece of child's play, very amusing and innocent ; for she remembered when Tom's father was born,

and had often nursed him herself when he was a sturdy infant ; and she could not fancy his son anything but a child, even when he was six feet high, with shoulders nearly as broad as his father's. He was truly a youth of giant size and strength, and Lizette could not help often recalling to mind the awe she felt on first seeing the doctor himself on that dark winter evening when Dillon Crosbie brought him to see her senseless father, long, long years ago. And where was Dillon Crosbie now ? The question often occurred to Lizette. The only thing she had heard of him for a very long time was, by a letter from Mrs. Pilmer to Mrs. Meiklam, in which information was given that her nephew, at his own desire, had got his commission in a light infantry regiment, stationed at Gibraltar, which Mrs. Pilmer lamented in affectionate and dreary terms, saying, that in her opinion, the army was a foolish profession for a young man who had not ample private means to defray the many expenses attending it ; and that she was sure dear Dillon would find

himself very straitened in circumstances, especially as she feared he had extravagant notions, like his poor father ; adding, that Mr. Pilmer would be delighted to allow him something yearly from his own income, if he could possibly afford it ; but really he had not a farthing to spare, their expenses in London were so high, notwithstanding their marvellous economy and self-denial ; and she really did not know what Dillon was to do ; she was in great anxiety about him, poor foolish, headstrong boy. Mrs. Pilmer had written that letter in a state of much excitement, as her husband had expressed a decided intention of allowing Dillon, at least two hundred a-year, till he should get his company, and she was driven to the pitch of throwing the burden from his shoulders to those of the Mistress of Meiklam's Rest, though she hated and dreaded the alternative. Mrs. Meiklam at once replied to the communication, in her own handwriting, addressing her letter to Mrs. Pilmer, to whom she gave an order to apply to her bankers in London for

one thousand pounds for Dillon Crosbie, for the purchase of his outfit, and other matters. This was more than Mrs. Pilmer had wished or looked for. A thousand pounds was a great deal of money ; fifty pounds, now and then, would have been quite enough to give Dillon, till he should get his lieutenancy, when he might very well live on his pay ; she almost regretted that she had mentioned him at all to Mrs. Meiklam. That was the last news, then, that Lizette had heard of Dillon Crosbie, for he did not come to say good-bye to Mrs. Meiklam before joining his regiment at Gibraltar though warmly invited to visit her, when he returned from Germany. The invitation was conveyed in a letter to his aunt, who never delivered the message to him, but wrote back to Mrs. Meiklam that he was in too great a hurry, preparing his outfit, to be able to leave London, as it was his wish to sail for Gibraltar at once, in a troop-ship going out immediately. Mrs. Meiklam was a little offended—especially as he did not even write to thank her himself; but

still she did not lose her interest in the son of one whom she had dearly loved. Once or twice the thought crossed her mind that something wrong was going on—something that she did not understand—something, in short, very like the truth. Some months after that, she thought she would make an alteration in her will which had been made many years before; and so her lawyer was despatched for by Luke Bagly, who was a man much in her confidence. Indeed one of Mrs. Meiklam's few faults was her blind trust in some unworthy people, whom she never could be persuaded to regard in a true light. Luke Bagly was one of these.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NEW WILL.

CUNNING in a remarkable degree, this man had for more than twenty years held supreme sway at Meiklam's Rest, where he first commenced his career in life, under the patronage of Colonel Meiklam, the late husband of his present mistress. Col. Meiklam, who was adored by his wife, requested her never to part with this faithful steward, as long as he conducted himself in a manner befitting his responsible calling, and she promised she would not. Tyrannical and oppressive to his inferiors, he, at the same time, treated all the servants,

who had particular access to the mistress, with so much consideration and attention, that the old lady rarely ever heard a word breathed against him ; and yet Luke was detested sorely by many a workman, and many a humble peasant. boastful of his influence at the Rest, he felt jealous of other favourites, even in a rank far above his own ; he disliked the young lady who was now allowed such rule and governance in the house, a person whom he considered “no better than one of his own daughters, for what was her father but a poor starved tutor, who had to beg, as you may say, after he was dead ?” And he likewise had always felt an enmity to Dillon Crosbie, another supreme favourite in childhood. In many ways Luke and the young gentleman had had differences of opinion ; they had quarrelled more than once, and the man always felt afraid that the youth would tell his mistress of these disputes, which were unfailingly very much to the discredit of himself ; but Dillon never mentioned them to Mrs. Meiklam ; he regarded tale-telling as deroga-

tory to the character of a gentleman; while on the other hand, Luke dared not breathe a word against the lad to his mistress, though he did not scruple to make complaints of him to Mrs. Pilmer, whom his sagacity soon taught him, was but too willing a listener to such stories. With all her own cunning, Mrs. Pilmer was yet far behind Luke Bagly in keenness of wit. Anyone, even not very deeply skilled in human nature, could see through that manœuvring lady; and when she talked familiarly to the wily steward of her affairs, her hopes, her regard for his mistress, &c., he knew very well, that she no more cared for him, or valued his confidence, than she cared for old Jenny Black, one of his mortal enemies. One of the few people who had ever dared to speak openly against Bagly to Mrs. Meiklam was poor old Jenny ; and of course the lady did not particularly heed her observations, though she frequently requested him to treat the crazy creature kindly, and not to mind her gathering firewood in winter in the wild part of the demesne ; but

nothing would have pleased Luke better than to chastise with stripes and blows the said being, had he dared. Bagly was a clever man ; he could write a good hand, having in his youth attended a respectable school, and for a short time he had acted in London as an attorney's clerk, till some misdemeanour of a grave kind sent him home in disgrace. He loved the law mightily ; and his great delight was to send to gaol boys caught robbing the orchards, or poachers of hares and pheasants. He managed the estate well enough, being a skilful agriculturist, enlightened enough to approve of new plans of farming. That he put money due to his mistress into his own pockets was very certain ; as also that he rode her horses without her knowledge, and sold sheep and lambs without mentioning the matter to her ; but, withal, Mrs. Meiklam got what she considered enough for the produce of her lands—more than many an honest, stupid steward, of former days, had ever been able to hand over to her. And then Luke kept such clear account books—

drew out such comparisons between different manures and their products, that his authority was often quoted in the agricultural notices of the *Yaxley Herald*. Indeed, Mr. Bagly had written more than one little article on guano and its fertilizing qualities in the said newspaper, greatly to his own satisfaction, and the increase of his self-importance. From various hints and conversations, Luke knew very well how Mrs. Meiklam wished to dispose of her property by will ; in fact, he knew the spot where she kept her will in the old-fashioned desk in the study, where he was wont to repair often to make up accounts for the lady, or receive instructions from her. One day she said to him, laughing and pointing to this little inner drawer, “ Luke, if I am carried away suddenly you will know where to find my will, so that there need be no searching all over the house for it.” And Luke had replied : “ Ah, God grant, ma’am, that the time may be long distant, when your will can be of any account ;” and, indeed, he spoke the truth, for it

would be surely a bad time for him. Again, Mrs. Meiklam had said, “ Bagly, I am going to make a codicil or another will altogether; so you may ride over for Mr. Hill to-morrow, early, and desire him to come to me without delay.” Accordingly, Luke rode away, looking full of importance, and pretty shrewd too. He was not an ugly man; his figure was tall and stout; his features well shaped, and his eye penetrating; his age about fifty-three, yet no one would have thought him so old, as he was almost as active as in youth, both as regarded mental and bodily qualifications. While riding over to Yaxley, that fine spring morning, he felt very brisk, and some thoughts, had long floated vaguely through his mind, seemed coming out clearer and clearer, as the freshening breeze swept over his forehead. On reaching Mr. Hill’s office, he found that worthy individual busy, as usual, with lots of countrymen awaiting an interview with him, in the hall.

“ Well Bagly, what news, now? What new idea has seized the good lady of the Rest?” called

out Hill, when he saw Luke among the group of men waiting to speak to him.

"Hang me, if I know, Mr. Hill," replied Luke, as he stepped into the office and closed the door; "but it's something about her will, that's all; and if she doesn't make a dozen wills yet before she dies, my name's not Bagly."

"Pooh!—a dozen!—no, but a score; there never was an old woman yet that had an acre of land that didn't leave it to every relation she possessed, and in the end die without a will at all; or, maybe, leave it to some charity!" said the attorney, with a twinkle of his eye, as Luke came near to him.

"Oh, just so, sir—it's the way of them all. But I daresay Miss Stutzer will come off well in this will, for she's in high favour."

"I must be mum about that," said the attorney shutting one eye. "I can't blab, you know. Tell Mrs. Meiklam I'll be at the Rest in two hours; I can't hurry any sooner."

So Bagly rode pompously home, glancing

scornfully through shop-doors, and at servant-men cleaning windows, or gossiping outside houses—glancing scornfully at almost everything.

“ Well, is he able to come?” demanded Mrs. Meiklam, when Bagly stood deferentially before her, hat in hand.

“ Yes, ma’am ; he is to make all the haste in his power ; he would not disappoint you for anything, though he is up to the eyes in business—he’ll be over from Yaxley in about two hours.”

“ Very well,” said Mrs. Meiklam, who was in the study, reading over her old will, which Luke eyed pretty sharply, though he had long known every word of its contents ; he looked well at the old-fashioned desk, too, and knew *where the key was kept.*

CHAPTER XX.

AN UNFORTUNATE MEETING.

"LET me carry that basket for you?" said Tom Ryder, as Miss Stutzer appeared before him in the elm grove, at Meiklam's Rest, bearing a somewhat heavy basket, containing cordials and other comforts for a sick peasant in the neighbourhood. It was late in the evening.

"Thank you, I can carry it myself," replied Lizette, her colour faintly rising.

"But I will not allow it," was the response, as the young man forcibly and suddenly seized the basket. "How can you be so cruel as you are,

Lizette—always refusing me everything? And for a whole week I have never seen you, though wandering about watching for you. Do you really wish to avoid me?"

"No; nor do I try to do so. If you have not seen me, it has been through chance. I have no wish to avoid meeting an old friend," said Lizette, with dignity, though her heart was palpitating.

"An old friend?—standing, in your estimation on the same terms as Hilbert or the parish clerk, I suppose?"

Lizette made no reply.

"What in the world is the use of being so demure as you always are? Surely a little flirtation cannot be set down as a terrible piece of wrong-doing. Starched and stiff as old Mother Meiklam now is, she had her own fun once, you may be certain; so she needn't want to lock you up."

"Mrs. Meiklam never wishes to prevent my doing what I please, or going where I choose,"

said the young girl colouring again; “and I do not think her in the least starched.”

“Evidently you do not agree with me in anything,” said Tom, hoisting the basket on his shoulder.

“You will let the basket fall, and break the bottles in it,” said Miss Stutzer, in alarm.

“Do not fear; I could carry it on my head quite safe; let’s have a look inside,” and Tom stopped to examine the contents.

“I have no time to spare,” cried the young girl, imploringly. “Oh, Tom, do not delay me!”

“Hah! that’s a nice cordial—suppose I tasted it?—and here a cake! ‘Pon my word, you give away fine dainties!’” And Mr. Ryder was a long while replacing each article taken out, and apostrophized at great length.

“Poor old Mary will have gone to sleep before I get to her house,” said Lizette, half crying. “Indeed, Tom, you are very unkind to annoy me in this way.”

“Unkind!” repeated Tom, emphatically. “You see, Lizette, how little you can bear the smallest trials of life, and yet you have not the slightest compassion for an unfortunate fellow ready to blow out his brains for you! Here, now, I will carry the basket all safe on my arm, if you will listen quietly to something I wish to say to you; for I am going to London by the mail to-night.”

“Do not say anything to me,” said the young girl, *naively*; “I am in too great a hurry now. See, the shadow of evening is coming on fast—the sun has set long ago.”

“Well, and of what consequence is it, if it has? Am I not here to escort you?”

“Mrs. Meiklam does not wish me to stay out after the dew falls.”

“That is only an old woman’s fancy. The dew is very wholesome—you know how it makes plants grow.”

Lizette smiled faintly, and despaired of influencing her provoking companion to hurry his

pace. They were in a dark wood, very far from the house, starting hares and rabbits as they went along, while the air was getting cooler each moment, and the dew lay already heavy on the grass and fern.

“Lizette, I remember you when you were a little child—so high,” said Tom, laying his hand near the earth; “and yet you treat me as if I were a perfect stranger to you; you have never given me a kiss in all the years we have known each other, and as we are about to part so soon, you might give me one now.”

In his efforts to gain what had been so long denied, Tom let the precious basket fall, and all its contents rolled out on the ground—the bottles were broken, as poor Lizette had prophesied.

She was too greatly offended and confused by the liberty he had taken of addressing her in this way, to feel so much for the loss of poor Mary’s cordial as she might otherwise have done; but, nevertheless, she was ready to weep from morti-

fication of every kind. Her face was flushed and tearful.

"You do not behave like a gentleman!" she exclaimed, really angry, while he stooped to pick up the things not injured by the fall.

"Come, Mr. Ryder, this is not proper conduct, sir!" said a voice, that made Lizette start; and in a moment Luke Bagly stood beside them. "Miss Stutzer, I am sorry to see you here—very sorry to see things going on this way."

"What the deuce is it to you?" demanded Ryder, indignantly. "I want to know what you mean?"

"I never bandy words when I can help it, sir," rejoined Bagly, gravely, and looking highly respectable; "but this young lady is under my honoured mistress's protection, and it is my duty to see that she is not led into error, or insulted. Don't be offended, young gentleman, at plain speaking."

"You are confoundedly mistaken, Mr. Bagly; I meant no insult to Miss Stutzer. I consider

that you, a rascally knave of a servant, are insulting her, though, and most insolent!"

"I am sorry, sir, such things should occur," returned Luke. "Miss Stutzer, I will wait to see you home."

"I need not now go on to Mary Browne's," said Lizette, trying to appear as dignified as she could. "I think I shall go home."

"You had better, miss," said Bagly, significantly; "home's the best place for young ladies."

Unwilling to let the steward think she had met any very serious insult from Ryder, the young girl bade him good evening with apparent coolness, but requested him not to think of coming home with her, which he acceded to, seeing that she was really distressed and serious. He was sorry that he had been the means of lowering her in the estimation of such a person as Luke Bagly, who either thought, or pretended to think, something very reprehensible had taken place.

"Miss Stutzer," said the man, gravely, as he

and she were walking towards home, “Mr. Ryder is not a fit young man for a companion this way—he’s a scamp, take my word for it; and if you meet him out in lonely places, the world ’ill talk—that it will.”

“Mr. Ryder may be a little rough and ungentlemanly, but I do not think he deserves such a character,” said Lizette, feeling much hurt.

“Oh, it’s natural for young ladies to take the part of their lovers, and all that; they can’t see clear, like men, who is to be trusted, and who not; but you know, Miss Stutzer, how many a salt tear Mrs. Meiklam would shed if there was a whisper of anything against your prudence.”

Poor Lizette was mortified in the extreme; she longed to speak a rebuke to the man who had the impertinence to offend her by such insinuations, but she was too gentle to give utterance to any sentence of the kind. And so she went on silently with the steward, who did not walk behind her as formerly, but beside her. This, however, might have been because the evening

was closing in. From the grieved, humbled aspect of the young girl, an observer might surely believe she had been doing something of which she was ashamed; while on the contrary, Bagly had the appearance of a highly respectable, fatherly individual, distressed at the wickedness of mankind.

“I should be loath to fret Mrs. Meiklam, Miss Stutzer,” he continued, clearing his throat, “but I’m afraid it’s my duty to mention Mr. Ryder’s ungentlemanly behaviour to her; don’t be vexed, miss, it’s only for your own good I take this liberty of cautioning you. I’m an elderly man, and I’ve got daughters of my own, and I know what the charge of young girls—ladies, I mean—is. No young woman can be too guardful of herself.”

Ah, if somebody could have throttled that man for his impertinence!

It is our own idea, reader, not Miss Stutzer’s; though she was scarcely able to move on, so great was her astonishment at Bagly’s hardihood.

Speak of her and Mr. Ryder to his mistress !
Really such impertinence was not to be borne !

“ My dear child,” exclaimed Mrs. Meiklam, as Lizette and Bagly entered the house in the dim light of the summer evening, “ you look very tired and jaded ; and what is this—your basket not empty ? Have you been ill ?”

“ No, not ill, but I did not go on,” whispered the young girl almost inaudibly.

“ What has happened, Luke ?” demanded the lady, looking sharply at the steward.

“ Oh, nothing, ma’am, nothing to signify ; it won’t happen again, I’m sure,” said Bagly, kindly.

“ What won’t happen ? Did you hurt yourself, my dear Lizette ? Speak, my darling, you quite alarm me with your pale looks.”

“ No ; I am quite well, but I feel fatigued ; I shall go and rest,” said Lizette, hurriedly, leaving down her basket, and repairing to the red-room, where she sank at once on the sofa. Mrs. Meiklam did not immediately follow her ; a glance

at Bagley's face told her that he had something to communicate, though he pretended he did not like to speak.

"Look at these broken bottles" said the old lady, taking a fragment of glass from the basket, and addressing Bagly who lingered on the door steps, "I must have an explanation of this affair. I greatly fear Miss Stutzer has met with some accident that she will not tell me of."

"No, ma'am, she hasn't; she's only just a little frightened, and put out at something ; she's young, Mrs. Meiklam, and she's a sweet young lady, God bless her, and I'm as sure as that I stand here, she has no more harm in her than the baby that's born yesterday!"

"Explain yourself," said Mrs. Meiklam, with dignity, as she motioned the man to enter the hall, and preceded him to the study, where she generally received the steward's communications.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BELL THAT LUKE BAGLY HEARS.

“ You know, Mrs. Meiklam,” said the wily man, standing humbly before her, “ that I’m only a servant, and I trust I never will conduct myself in a manner to give offence to my superiors. If I have ever forgotten my station, or spoke too freely to anyone above me, I may have done it in haste, or thinking to advise them ; but, thank God, I know my place, and what I ought to say, and what I oughtn’t.”

“ That is all very proper, of course,” said the lady lighting a taper, that only threw a faint

light on the old-fashioned desk, and the numerous papers strewed on the tables, "but I do not know what you mean exactly. I merely wish to understand if anything unpleasant has occurred to Miss Stutzer; I know there are some fierce dogs about that I must get rid of, and perhaps one of them has attacked her. She has a great terror of dogs."

"No, ma'am! thank God, it isn't a dog; no you may rely on it, she's safe, and be sure it won't happen any more. She's a sweet young wom—lady, and I have every faith in her."

Mrs. Meiklam stared at Bagly, and a faint colour stole over her face as she said,

"I wish you to speak clearly. Tell me in plain words why Miss Stutzer has returned without, visiting Mary Browne's cottage: Has anything occurred of an unpleasant nature at Mary's house?"

"No, ma'am; nothing at all at Mary Browne's house; there's nothing in the world to be uneasy about. I'm a father, Mrs. Meiklam, and I have a feeling for young people, and I wouldn't wish

to be making mischief, only I'd try to have things going right wherever I was. I can't, of course, control what's going on in other places, but what's under my own eye, I'll be mindful of. The poor dear Colonel, my late honoured master, used to say: 'Luke, it's your especial charge to watch over every interest of your employers; nothing that happens under their roof is without importance to you, though it mayn't just be within your own calling; that's what constitutes a good servant. If the coachman's ill, act for him; and if the butler's away, don't be above doing his work.' Ah! the Colonel was a fine spoken gentleman!"

Whenever Luke wished to win over his mistress particularly, he generally brought in the name of her husband; sometimes making imaginary speeches for the defunct Colonel, which was intended to elevate himself in her opinion. Certainly, if Colonel Meiklam had ever given any such piece of advice touching the points that constitute a good servant, Bagly had not profited by

it. No servant at Meiklam's Rest ever remembered him to offer his assistance to them in the smallest matter, beyond his own particular station ; and even in the busiest haymaking time he never was known to lend a helping hand in the fields. Mrs. Meiklam listened patiently to his long-winded speech, and then demanded, once more, an explanation of his hints. Bagly drew his handkerchief over his forehead, slowly and thoughtfully as if striving to delay what he had to communicate, and then, supporting himself by laying one hand on the back of a chair, he commenced :

“ You know Mrs. Meiklam, that I wouldn't presume to speak of this matter, only you have so much wished to hear it ; and then as I said before, being a father of grown up-daughters, I feel that the well-being of every young woman, in whatever rank she may be, is of concern to me. Then, you know, if I am aware that a young lady, innocent and gentle as an angel, is likely to be deceived by any unpromising young man in the neighbour-

hood, I'd blame myself for allowing her to fall into the snare—that's all."

"All? I do not understand to whom you allude."

"I wish you never might know it, ma'am; I allude, however, to Miss Stutzer and Mr. Tom Ryder; they're a-courtin', ma'am, and a-meeting more times than anybody knows, in evenings, through the grounds; and I have every reason to know Mr. Tom's a wild young man, not to be trusted; he's full of his scampish tricks."

"And they met this evening?" asked Mrs. Meiklam, looking with penetration at Bagly's face—a new light all at once flashing over her mind.

"They did, ma'am; I saw them myself, and I am sorry for it—indeed I am; there was no mistakin' it. Mr. Tom had his arm round her, ma'am, and he kissed her, though it was against her will, that I must say."

"Are you not aware, Bagly, that these young

people have been intimate since childhood?" asked the lady, trembling in her speech, though she still fixed her eyes unflinchingly on the man's countenance.

"I know that, ma'am; but kissing isn't right seeing they're both grown up; and God knows I wouldn't have mentioned the matter, only I thought it my duty. Perhaps you may take it as a great liberty, ma'am."

"I do take it as such," said the lady slowly, and with her face kindling up proudly. "I know Mr. Tom Ryder is a rough, uncouth young man—apt to forget himself occasionally; he would think it no harm to kiss his old playmate, though I strongly disapprove of such liberties; and I know also that Miss Stutzer, so far from encouraging his attentions, always endeavours to stop them; she has never mentioned the subject to me through her natural modesty; but I am fully aware that Mr. Ryder admires her, at the same time that I see equally clearly that she does not like him."

"You may be mistaken ma'am," said the dis-

concerted steward, a gleam of malice and anger darting into his eye, not unseen by the lady watching him so narrowly.

“Do not dare to insinuate another sentence against Miss Stutzer,” said Mrs. Meiklam, calmly but firmly ; “if ever any servant of mine again takes such a liberty, he or she leaves my house and my service for ever !”

“I humbly beg your pardon ma'am,” said Luke, lowering his head and his voice. “I only spoke for the best, and most glad I am you take the matter easy.”

“Silence,” said the lady, quietly, “You may now leave the room.”

Never before had Mrs. Meiklam so addressed her long-favoured steward—never spoken such degrading words to him. Bitterly he resented them ; bitterly he hated Miss Stutzer. He would have revenge most certainly. Mrs. Meiklam, herself, felt very much perturbed that evening. She remained long in the study, meditating. Dear to her as a child of her own, she felt most

keenly the audacity of Bagly in speaking of Lizette as he had spoken. Had he entertained the respect for the young lady that she wished all her servants to feel, he never would have dared to breathe such words in her hearing. In fact, the good mistress of the Rest grew quite excited, contemplating the insult directed to her protégée, by a person of Bagly's position in life. She went to find Lizette, but the young girl had lain down on her bed, where, after a long fit of violent weeping, she was fast asleep. "I will not disturb her, poor child," said the lady softly leaving the chamber.

They met no more that night—nor never more as they had met of old—oh, nevermore!

Bagly always sat up very late in his room now—long after the rest of the inmates of the house had gone to bed. His accounts seemed very intricate at present. Softly he sometimes went through the lobbies and corridors, far past the midnight hour, stealing to the study, and rummaging through various documents, and reading

things that did not concern the farm in the least : and then he would take out the unsealed will so lately made, and lying in the little inner drawer of the desk, and peruse it, and bring it away to his own room, where, with door locked, and shaded light, he would write, and write, and copy sentences, and feel all the time that he could make nothing of it ; he never could succeed in a skilful forgery, though he had tried his hand at forging since he was in the lawyer's office, years upon years ago. Well, upon this particular and memorable night, when the house was quiet, he determined he would, at every hazard, endeavour to accomplish his longed-for task — a codicil, at least, might be completed. So he went to the study, and secured the will, and was carrying it away in his pocket, when it struck him that he would first go out and see about poachers, &c., before he sat down to write. He left the house accordingly, and sallied forth. The night was still and lovely — so lovely, that no one would have dreamed that the presence of death was approaching where he

was not expected, that the grim king was careering upon the wings of the soft summer wind. Somehow, Bagly missed his footing and fell among sharp, brambly underwood, which tore his coat, and scratched his face and hands, and he had some difficulty scrambling out of it. At length, however, he was free, and he drew out his handkerchief and wiped his visage carefully, returning to the house at once. On reaching the study he sat down to write, and put his hand in his pocket for the will, when lo! it was not to be found. He searched, he turned the pockets inside out, but in vain. The will was gone—pulled out of its resting place, probably, in the fall among the strong underwood, or when drawing out his handkerchief. Again out in the moonlight, searching vainly ; looking all over the paths he had lately trodden ; hunting among the fern and brushwood—all in vain. Great Heaven ! what would become of him in the morning, when perhaps Mrs. Meiklair might rise to look at her

will? Would she suspect him of having meddled with it? Would she make another and leave his name out of it—his name, which had been noted down for a legacy of one hundred pounds! In agony, the guilty man sat in his room thinking many awful things—more awful than we would dare to write; and, while he sat, he cursed Lizette Stutzer vehemently. Poor little Lizette, who was sleeping still, lying outside her bed, moaning occasionally in her slumbers, fancying Tom Ryder was going to shoot both her and himself, and that Mrs. Meiklam was looking on indifferently with a cold, stony eye, and a bleached face. You may moan and sigh, indeed, poor child! For a mighty change is coming to you. Little barque, anchored for so many years in a quiet haven, shut in from the storms of the wild ocean, prepare to sally forth o'er tempestuous seas—loose their moorings and drift out towards the unknown.

The small hours of the night strike clearly on the still wakeful ear of Luke Bagly, when another

sound makes him start like one stabbed. What is that bell ringing so violently—clanging all through the wide old house, with a fearful vibration—one great peal, and then silence, when it dies out tremulously?

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SUDDEN CALL.

Do you know what it is, reader, to hear the quick tramp of horses' feet on a lonely road at dead of night? Is there not something sinister, as one lies awake in bed, or perhaps sits up engaged with some occupation, beyond the due hour of rest, in the clatter of horses' hoofs' breaking the stillness of the air, as, with lightning speed a horseman dashes by?

One soft summer night, when the starlight was fading before the coming dawn, and the wind scarce rose above a breath, any one awake

at Yaxley might have heard the sounds we refer to. The calmness of the night suffered them to be borne distinctly upon the light breeze. Tramp ! click, clock ! click, clock ! click, clock !—on they sounded, at first far in the distance, then coming nearer—always nearer, till horse and rider, with mad impatience dash into the principal street of the town, and stop—listeners know where they will stop—at Doctor Ryder's large house ; and the hall-door bell is rung violently, almost wildly, and in a few moments the physician is out of bed, hurrying, like one frantic, to get on his clothes. Oh ! very few minutes elapse till the herculean doctor is dressed and down stairs, and springing upon the back of the panting steed at the door, for he has his whole heart—his whole heart indeed—in that sick call. And now the horse is flying back to the place from whence it came—flying, if possible, quicker than before, while the messenger who rode it first is hurrying behind on foot. What road is it flying on ? a road you should know well, reader—a quiet, country road, whose green

hedges are well defined by the starlight. On, on, horse and rider are flying, and they come to a wide-open, old-fashioned gateway, with gray stone eagles on the pillars at either side, and many fine old trees, extending dimly beyond it—now scarcely waving their heavy, verdant branches, so faint is the wind of the summer night. Up, up the avenue faster, faster, for there is no moment to lose! The house is reached at last; the doctor dismounts—the hall-door is open—he bounds up the steps; there is light in the hall—lights seem everywhere. A woman is at the door awaiting his arrival—no speech is exchanged between them, for the doctor is a man of few words; she leads him swiftly up stairs; and there on the lobby he is met by an elderly woman, holding up her hands and sobbing grievously.

“Oh, doctor! doctor! I’m afraid it’s no use—I’m afraid all’s over! Oh, dear! oh, dear!” But Doctor Ryder hates ebullitions of feeling, especially when in a hurry, and suffering mentally himself, and he pushes on to a chamber, whose

door lies open, without paying attention to anything else. Softly he enters here — treading noiselessly — his lips trembling — his forehead furrowing into a frown. It is very hard for him to contain one great outburst of surprise and grief. Yet why surprise? Does not he, above all others, know that in the midst of life we are in death? On the bed before him is lying a motionless form with closed eyes, seeming to sleep—yet sleeping no earthly sleep; the features are composed, but rigid; the hands cold, the pulse silent. The doctor looks hopelessly on, and you, reader, may look on, too; for that stiff form is an old familiar one: it is all that remains of the benevolent mistress of Meiklam's Rest. Ay, it is Mrs. Meiklam that lies dead there. In the silent watches of the night the enemy entered the dwelling, with noiseless step, and his freezing fingers touched her heart. A sudden pain seized her—a pang of mortal agony—and loudly her bell rang through the house. Servants rushed to her room, and found her expiring.

“Had anything annoyed or agitated her lately?” asked Doctor Ryder of Miss Stutzer, who was sitting in the room of death, not sobbing or weeping, but pale and petrified.

“Not that I am aware of; she seemed in her usual spirits yesterday.”

“I have known for some time that her heart was diseased, but I thought she might with care have lasted for some years. I always impressed upon her the great danger of exciting herself upon any topic.”

“I do not think anything annoyed or excited her,” repeated the young girl, confidently; and then, all at once, the thought struck her—“Suppose Luke Bagly had told her, as he said he would, about her *rencontre* with Tom Ryder, last evening?” Oh, the dark horror of that thought!

“You must feel this sudden call of your friend very deeply,” said the physician, looking pityingly at the orphan girl, who, all at once, seemed over-powered by a great pang of sorrow.

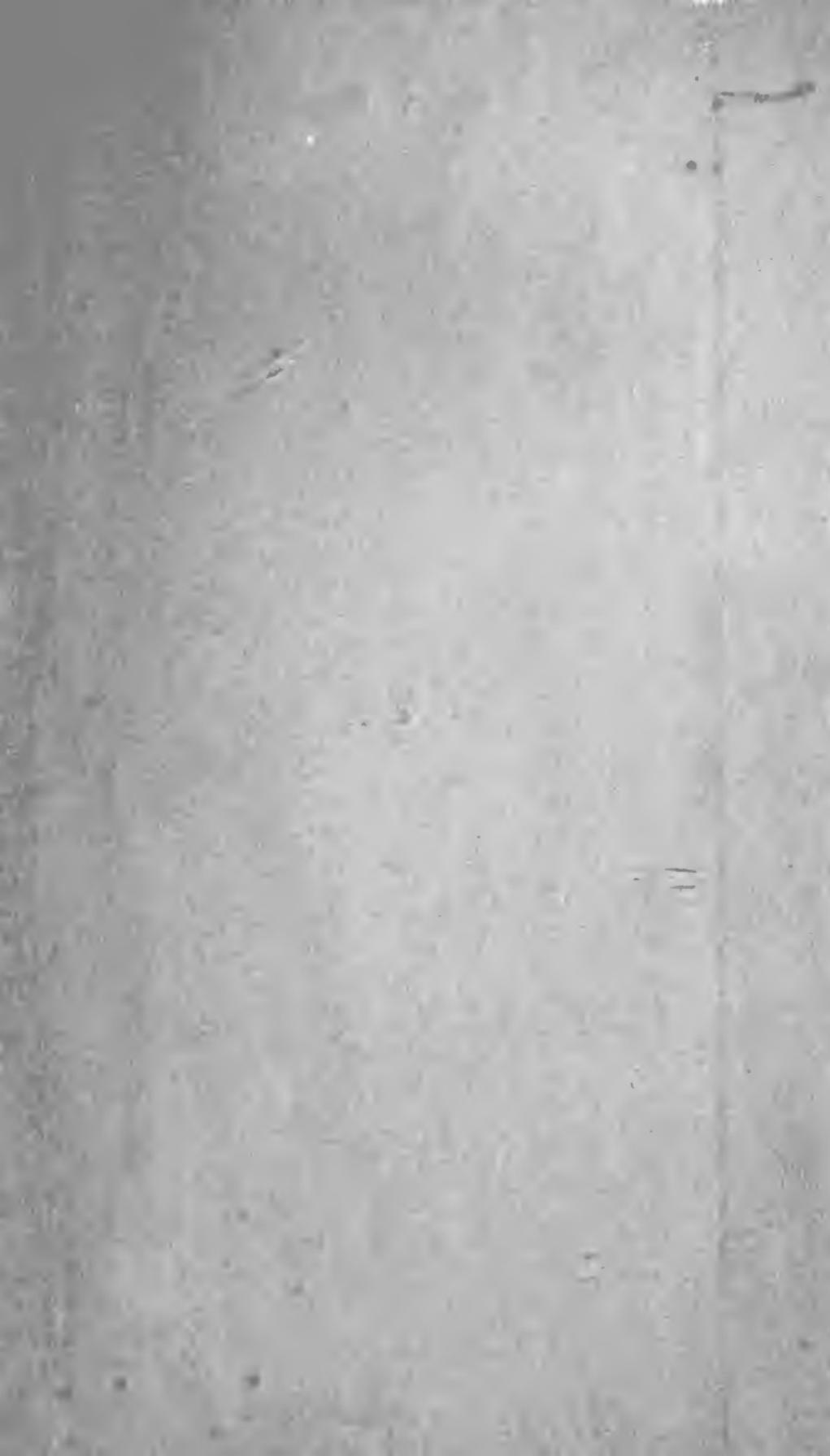
"Oh, it is hard to bear!" cried the poor girl, clasping her hands wildly. "I do not know how I shall learn to be resigned, though I feel so confidently that she has entered upon her eternal rest."

The kind-hearted physician inwardly hoped provision had been amply made in the deceased lady's will for the forlorn young person, who otherwise would find the world a harsh school, where she would learn much she never knew before. Unwilling to leave the distressed girl, he remained at Meiklam's Rest till the sun was high in the sky, and then, in the bright summer morning, he rode home to Yaxley. Did it seem strange that the sunlight glittered upon tree, and shrub, and meadow as of yore? For a moment Lizette thought that it did—but only for a moment. Was not she, who had loved every nook and corner of the Rest, basking in eternal sunshine—everlasting light? Yes; the sun might shine warmly and brightly upon all outward things, for death had only been there, setting a purified spirit free.

There was great weeping among the numerous domestics for the much-esteemed mistress, so suddenly summoned from them. Mrs. Copley was in despair; Peggy Wolfe, Bingham, and the other lower servants almost equally distressed; while old Jenny Black ran frantically from her wretched hut, far off among the woods, in hopes of being allowed to lay her eyes on the corpse of the good lady, which Lizette good-naturedly permitted, very much against the wishes of some of the servants. Luke Bagly, in great grief and perturbation of mind, kept aloof from fellow-sufferers; and, probably, to relieve his agony, went about wandering through the grounds, with his eyes fixed upon every path, and brake, and briar, as he passed along, searching wildly everywhere, but in vain. Surely he had cut a rod to beat himself as well as others.

END OF VOL. I.





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